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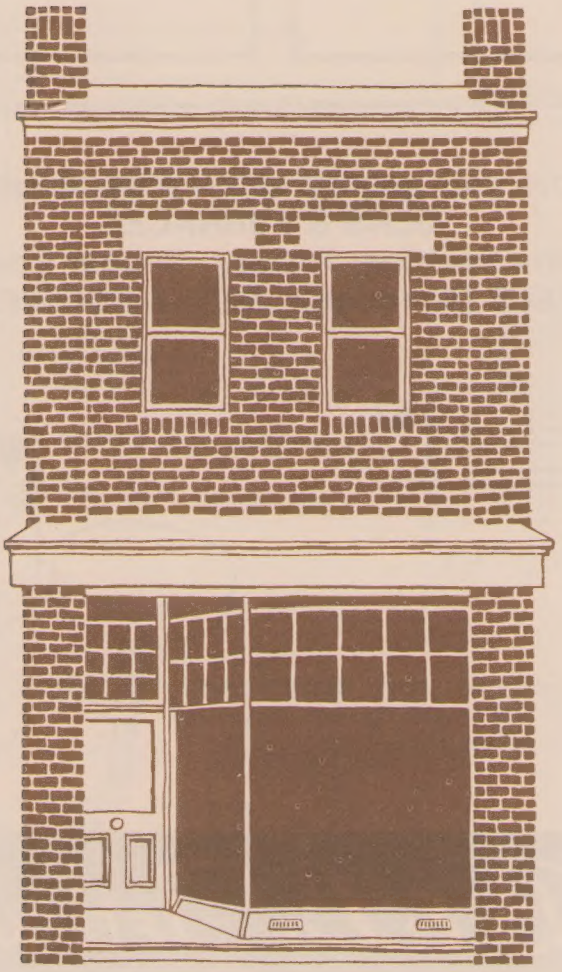

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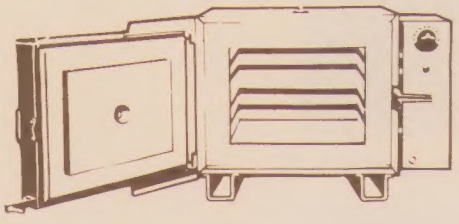

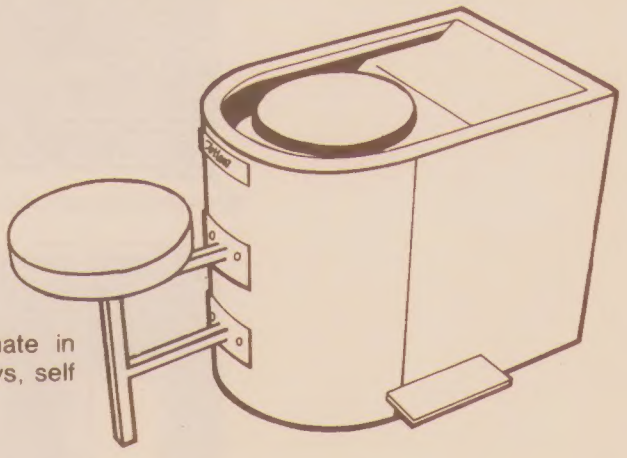

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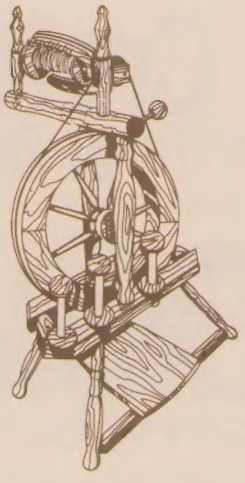

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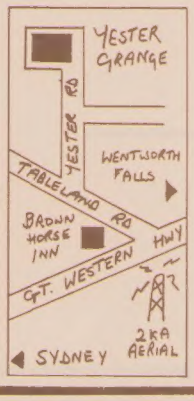

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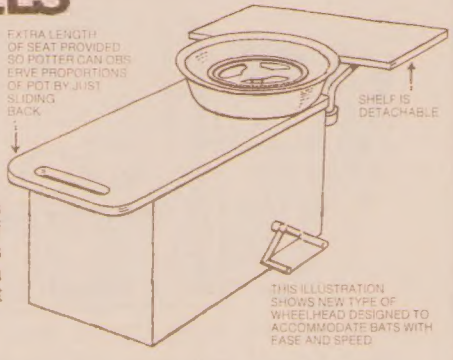
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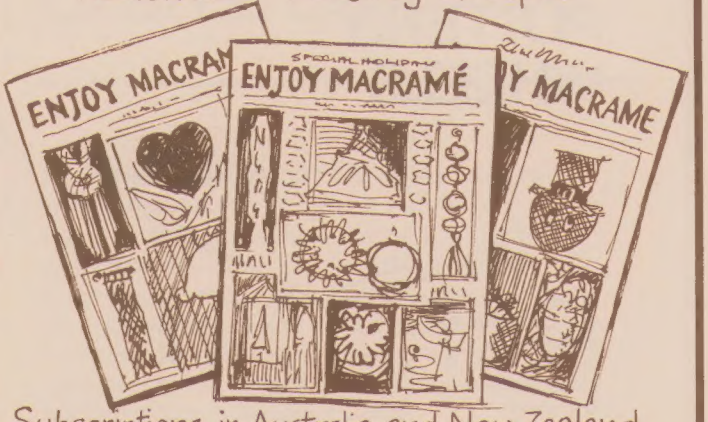

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1979/1 **Cover**

Sicilian puppet 'Charlemagne' by Amando Friolo and Giovanni Bronzino. Photography: Oliver Strewe

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Editorial

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the establishment of the state of Western Australia which gives Craft Australia the opportunity to place some emphasis on the craft work being done there. Originally we planned to devote a whole issue to the west but decided that it would be better to continue to report on western craftsmen throughout the year, and in fact through all the years to come.

In this issue West Australian George Mulgrue debates the question of isolation. Is it an asset or a liability? We also show the work of some of W.A.I.T.'s current students and graduates and in future issues will show other talented craftsmen from the west.

This is the International Year of the Child and a fitting time to show the work of another group of West Australian students from Mt. Lawley College of Advanced Education who last year produced a specially crafted tactile panel for blind children. It is also interesting to record the work of two Sicilians who have reproduced the puppets of their childhood to provide an old tradition in a new land.

We would also like to thank the many craftsmen in all states who provide a constant advisory service on all aspects of the magazine, who produce a stream of ideas, slides, and the occasional constructive criticism and who keep a vigilant watch for new talent. Until recently we listed names of craftsmen who advised from time to time but the interest in the magazine is so great that this practice seems unfair to those not mentioned. But we are most anxious to hear any comments about the magazine and to receive ideas and articles. Articles should be 1,000 to 1,500 words in length, typewritten and double-spaced, accompanied by clear black and white photographs or 35 mm slides. Reviews of exhibitions in all states are particularly welcome.

April Hersey

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Kevin Perkins

Kevin Perkins at work in his studio.

It was once said of the painter Monet that he possessed the hand and eye of a great tennis player, and for those of us who are in accord with the "You beauty Newc." idea, this encapsulation is at first highly attractive. But, like all attempts to enforce compression where it isn't warranted, the statement is nowhere near enough to describe what is felt when the Monets, and the Newcombes, perform their art.

If hand and eye were indeed enough, all would be much simpler, but there would be no magic anywhere. Imagine a world where the technical teachers' skills were demonstrated in public and private decoration. Enough to chill one to the marrow. No, hand and eye must have the momentum of a mind that knows what *needs* to be done, and the urgency of an ego that converts this to *must* be done.

My backhander to the technical teachers of this world is quite deliberate; like so many people who envy the great gifts that technicians possess, the care and feeling with which a good number of them work, the skills they bring to the commonplace and, far from least, their ongoing engagement with their craft, what plagues me is the thoughtlessness about where these skills may lead them, or where these skills should be directed. Or, to reduce the problem to its basic: what the hell to do with their skill. One has only to watch a programme like the ABC "Inventors" to see examples of intelligence, skill and application in the service of minds that seldom know what needs to be done. And so through the population at large we see the curious amalgamation of therapy and skill that produces the "handyman."

As in all things beyond the ordinary, the solution to this problem is no secret. It lies within the will of the individual concerned, and so the language is richer because of the efforts of John Newcombe. "You beauty, Newc . . ." is now a fluency of communication everywhere. So with Kevin Perkins, whose background has taken him from Devonport, Tasmania, as a skilful student, to "Apprentice of the Year" (apprenticed in carpentry and joinery), to a period in Sydney continuing his trades skills, then into the teaching service as guess what? Finally ending his time with the teaching service in Hobart.

And so we find him today at work in his bushland hilltop workshop/residence, at the beginning of a period of effort which will surely take him into consideration as one of the leading craftsmen in Australia.

My confidence in making that statement is based on several factors: first, my estimate of the judgement he has shown over the years as to what is needed for him to advance the state of his work, and the unassuming determination he has shown in doing this. There has been an admirable coherence to all he has done over the last ten years, much of it instinctive and perceptive, and certainly not "proveable" to his peers, because what he was doing was finding a path out of the dead-end of technical skill. Ingredients of that judgement are imagination and an intelligence reflected in the contrast of "detail" with "broad view".

Beginning with his workshop Kevin has proceeded to balance the finest of detailing (watch as you get to the top of the stairway, for the magical butting-in of a rafter into a pole . . . it just slides into the log and disappears) with the delights of totally unexpected areas. He has managed to foreclose completely on the greatest weakness of contemporary architecture — its utter predictability. And this attitude has spilled over into his thinking on contemporary woodcraft.

There is another aspect that should be noted, for I believe that there is a basic body of knowledge which we shall term "conventional craft wisdom", and, while I firmly believe that the bathwater should be frequently thrown out, perhaps in the long run it's best to hang on to the baby during this exchange. What delights me a great deal in studying Kevin's progress so far, is that there has been a lineage of craftsmen who have contributed directly to his present situation. First, there was Horrie White, of Devonport, who gave Kevin his introduction to working to high standards. Then, in Hobart Tom Brown brought the finer skills of the master tradesman. Then came a period of rather intensive pressure from the visiting Canadian craftsman, Don McKinley. Don is a man of strong ideas, strongly expressed, not a person for the faint-hearted. His presence in Hobart found out quite a few faint hearts, although they would not care to see it quite like that. His view of the total craftsman found an echo in what had really only been a subconscious thought in Kevin's mind until then. The American concept of excellence, and the continuing pressure on excellence, as contrasted to the "she'll be right, mate" we are all so familiar with, also fell readily on Kevin's ear. The period of reacting to Don McKinley's mind was possibly the most stimulating of all, and so one is able to trace this craft lineage right to the doorstep of Kevin's workshop, where it resides, in Tasmania, at this time.

Perhaps it is necessary to remind readers that Kevin's effective work time, in this period of work for which he has geared himself, has been comparatively short. It

Curved table support.

Detail of table support.

Small table with sculptured legs.

Sculptural treatment of table base.

Detail of base.

Interior of house.

House and workshop.

Music stand.

was only in August 1977 that he resigned from teaching, to complete his workshop and begin his craft. Undoubtedly the major objects for discussion are his tables. With the three completed so far, there is a fine progression of idea, easily discernible. The first has a conventional four leg support — within the form of this, however, the main horizontal brace is deliciously conceived and subtly explored in terms of hard and soft-edged forms, giving a fine reading of strong light and shadow in its architecture. Next comes a remarkable tour-de-force as the traditional leg concept is abandoned and two massive polished logs are interwoven and looped beneath the fan-shaped table top. Certainly for me, this is the first table I have ever encountered where, beautiful as the polished Huon pine planks are, I spend most time enjoying the generous forms of sculptured volumes beneath. Kevin has in mind to complete this as a full unit, working on the seating arrangement at a later date. The most recent table is an exercise in cantilevered form. Here a remarkable natural conformation of strongly coiled, circled timber is the origin of the forms which spring from this base. This project is certainly the most adventurous yet, and leads to speculation on future forms.

Of course, as the point of origin of so much of Kevin's work is the growth form of the timber, its apparently random eccentricity, the availability of these forms determines production. So far, exploratory trips to the West Coast, fossicking over the countryside, collecting what conventional millers discard, has been the way Kevin accumulates his repertoire of forms. Each table really begins as its potential is observed, often in thick scrub, probably in pouring rain, certainly in muddy marshland. A far cry indeed from the suave, pristine impeccability of the final object. The momentum of a mind that knows what needs to be done.

Kevin Perkins has emphasised the art in his craft by determining what he wanted to make, rather than by taking the usual stance of the craftsman of making what needs to be made. By so doing, he becomes a maker of fashion, a forerunner.

An exciting result of this, as shown by the outstanding reception his work received at his first one man exhibition, was that the audience to whom he addressed himself approved totally. Three quarters of the work shown was sold on the opening night.

Bill Howroyd, opening the show at the Design Centre of Tasmania in Launceston made the point of Kevin having put himself at risk, as any audacious creater must. At risk in the sense of having built an entire life-style and complex of work process around his enterprise. For the many craftsmen seeking a re-inforcement of their sense of direction, Kevin's achievements with his first show must offer great challenge.

Peter Taylor

Peter Taylor is a sculptor who works in wood and has been a lecturer at the Tasmanian School of Art. He exhibited at Watters Gallery Sydney in 1978.

Peter Wirsching

An interesting private artist-in-residence scheme has recently been pioneered by a Sydney gallery. Under the auspices of Mr and Mrs Raaymakers of Allegro Gallery (Kenthurst) a master woodcarver from Germany, Peter Wirsching was invited to stay, work and share his skills and knowledge with Australian craftsmen. He arrived on the 1st August and left on the 18th September 1978.

Peter Wirsching is an artist craftsman who was born on the 6th October 1941 into a tradition for which we have no equivalent here. Some twenty years ago he finished his 4 year apprenticeship in the Bavarian Mountains in Garmish Partenkirchen. He came back to settle in his parent's house in Diessen-Ammersee, near Munich on the lake of the same name: a tourist resort of leisurely pace but more importantly a cooperative among several artists and craftsmen. Kindred spirits in the production of beauty, traditional and experimental, side by side — painters, printers, photographers, potters, wood carvers, tin and lead figurine casters etc.

Peter Wirsching was a welcome change in Australia. No big words, no ego-manic tirades on 'art' versus 'craft'. He simply went to work quietly. Speaking of our local timbers he said that Iron bark, Black wood and cedar were good but often still too 'green' when worked. He did not recommend Murenti and found our maple, although easy to carve, disappointing when finished. He fell in love with Huon Pine, which is getting scarcer and more expensive by the day. He came quite prepared to use local timber, not expecting that the 'new world' could provide him with what he is used to (oak, chestnut, poplar etc.). He spent two weeks visiting timber yards, buying and testing before setting to work. When asked about the easiest mistakes made when beginning wood carving he answered: "People pick up projects beyond their grasp or knowledge. Slowly build up your knowledge. Tools are most important, sharpening, caring, handling takes time to learn. Always start with a warming up period for one must control one's discovery of three dimensional work. Slowly pick the form in the mass, and control the depth of the work from the surface. People want too much too quickly."

As a teacher in Germany he designed a four point programme which included, Technique sampler and exercises, Technique and design, Design (head) and Creativity (heart).

Listening to Peter I was reminded of Herman Hesse's book Narziss and Goldmund, of a rhythm and teaching long forgotten in our world of instant coffee and expressways and pulp wood.

F. M. R. Chepeaux

Peter Wirsching with some of the bird shapes he produced for his Australian exhibition.

Photography: Frederic Chepeaux

The Queensland Woodcraftsmen's Guild

Bench done in Tasmanian Oak. Frank Weisner.

Exposed dovetail stool of Swiss design by Robert Dunlop. With the knocking out of two wedges the stool can easily be dismantled.

The formation of the Queensland Woodcraftsmen's Guild was brought about through the concern of a number of professional craftsmen, worried for the future of woodcrafts. Their concern centred on a decline in quality and pride of workmanship, brought about by the poor standards being accepted by the public and timber workers alike.

The guild feels this decline in standards is so serious that if there isn't a re-establishment of quality, then we may lose forever the tradesmanship and pride of workmanship of the past. They feel that by establishing the Woodcraftsmen's Guild, standards will be uplifted and hopefully other trades will follow.

Some of the guilds formed throughout the craft spectrum today are more concerned with numbers than quality. Historically membership of a guild expressed to the general public that a person had managed to achieve a quality far above the average.

Precision cramps using screw threads in timber. Frank Weisner.

Matching stool to the bench using centre wooden screw thread. Frank Weisner.

Full membership of the Queensland Woodcraftsmen's Guild is open to all who have attained a standard of excellence in a woodcraft. Samples of work must be submitted to a panel of guild members for their assessment and criticism.

Members' ages range from late twenties to late sixties, with both men and women attaining sufficient standards. Skills involved are in turning, carving, cabinet making, joinery, musical instrument making and wood sculpture.

Their first exposure to the general public came in autumn of 1978 at an exhibition held at the Queensland Museum. Officially opened by the Queensland Minister for National Parks and Culture Mr Newbury, the exhibition was a non-sale event. It was designed primarily to show the standards of excellence achieved by members of the guild.

This exhibition marked a change in policy for the Queensland Museum, as it was the first time they had made space available for the mounting of an outside group's exhibition.

Two of the Guild members are Frank Weisner and Robert Dunlop. Frank Weisner, now living in Toowoomba (128 km West of Brisbane) migrated to Australia many years ago after fifteen years experience at the woodworking benches in Germany. Although working full time in timber his spare time is also devoted to timber.

"I started on wooden screw threads after seeing a demand for them and realising that no-one in my area was making them. At first I found it tremendously hard to get information on threads. The craftsmen who nad done a bit in the past wouldn't tell me much. After getting them to work, I started to produce thumb screws, furniture knobs and violin cramps. And nut crackers, just for fun.

"The threads are cut mainly in harder timbers. The smaller screws are made with a single cutter operated by hand and for the larger types I use a specially adapted router.

"In looking for timber for screw threads you are not looking for a timber that snaps easily, rather one that is fairly stringy with a good straight grain. I've used Tasmanian Oak, Coastal Mahogany and Tasmanian

Sassafras, but I'm sure there are other good Australian timbers you can use."

Apart from the novelty items such as nutcrackers and the knobs and clamps used in precision work, Frank has drawn on his experience in timber and screw threads to make benches.

"My wooden bench is designed primarily for the home worker as it is a fairly small bench. It incorporates wooden threads that ensure many years of active service."

Extending the versatility of the bench is the use of dogs. To hold varying lengths of timber on the bench the vice is backed then tightened to hold the timber against the dogs.

"The type of timber I have used is a eucalypt hardwood Tasmanian Oak, because it is both beautiful and stable. The finish is completely hand done, being hand scraped and true. It shouldn't warp or twist so you will get years and years out of a bench like this. To complete the set I have made a stool; with matching Tasmanian Oak, with turned rails and legs and a screw-up seat making it fully adjustable."

When asked about his attitudes to craftsmanship today Frank replied, "People are used to symmetry. Machine made products are identical. Hand made pieces have character, the character of the maker creates them as individual pieces. Enjoyment for the creator and the user is everything. I would prefer to give a piece away to someone who is going to use and appreciate it rather than try to make a great profit from it."

Although coming from different backgrounds and conditions Robert Dunlop has similar beliefs. Beginning work at 12, apprenticed at 13 to a high class Swiss cabinet maker and designer in Brisbane, he is President of the guild and heads his own furniture manufacturing business.

Referring to his Swiss master,

"In my younger days I never knew what a goldmine I was involved in. When I came back from the war I realised that the man's potential was just so great, compared to the average production ability of the run-of-the-mill cabinet maker in Brisbane at that time.

"What I really regret is that I didn't see his potential soon enough and learn more from him. Possibly I learnt 50% of what he knew and most of my apprentices today only want to learn about 20% of that. There are a few exceptions but not many.

"For instance I can tell the young people working here to lick the face of the chisel before doing an end-grain cut, but only those who want to learn will do it. If your chisel is sharp and clean you don't mind doing it, and you get an absolutely perfect face, instead of a chewed one.

"There would be thousands of those little tricks that I and others in the guild know. When I die, many of mine will be gone because people just don't want to learn. It's all right for a keen amateur to say he wants to learn, but that amateur is not applying it every day and so he forgets. This unfortunately, is where the pure craft and craftsmanship is being eroded at such a fast rate."

Much of Robert's furniture has a sensual beauty in both design and finish.

"In finishing timber I was taught that you physically polish the timber itself. You don't use a spray-on surface to make it glossy. After the sealing coats of shellac, it's the burnishing of the timber from there on that makes the timber look beautiful. If you do it that way then you can physically look into the timber itself as the first eighth of an inch is transparent.

"There are so many beautiful joints that have been invented. There is nothing new in timber as far as joints are concerned. You can build a cupboard with absolutely no glue whatsoever and the whole thing locks itself together. In the very old days in Europe the furniture was made this way; so that you could bump the pieces apart into a flat stack able to be carried from house to house.

"One of the beauties of working with timber as a medium is that any person who uses it, handles and feels it. Timber is a living thing, not like a piece of steel. If you handle timber lovingly, it reflects it and you must get something from it yourself. It is a beautiful feeling. If you are working with timber whatever you love about it goes back into the job."

Leigh and Barbara Hemmings

A sculpture/carving by Robert Dunlop of father, son and daughter.

Leigh & Barbara Hemmings are travelling Australia documenting the work of craftsmen.

Photography: L. & B. Hemmings

Nut crackers. Frank Weisner.

John Makepeace

John Makepeace

John Makepeace, one of England's foremost wood craftsmen, with his quiet scholarly style suits the stately home in which he has established his workshop and his school — Parnham House in Dorset, England. The house itself is so filled with finely crafted timbers that it is entirely appropriate for its present role.

In the gentle countryside of southern England the house of mellow golden "ham-stone" from a local quarry on Hamden Hill, stands in its formal 14 acres of garden which includes clipped Yew walks and a walled garden of espaliered pears. It is a grade one national monument. Throughout the centuries it has suffered neglect and restoration in equal measure in what John Makepeace calls "a hundred year cycle".

"It has had four main phases. First the original manor surrounded by 5,000 acres. In the 17th century the kitchens were added. This is now a private house for the head of the school, Robert Ingham. In the 18th century the servants' wing was completed. This is where the students now live, where they have their study bedrooms, their offices, the refectory, their sitting room, T.V., table tennis and so on. In the 19th century the stable wing was added. This is where I have the workshop.

"The refectory is the heart of the house. All staff, all students, all visitors eat there. It isn't because I feel we all get on so well but it is essential for craftsmen to be able to communicate. I believe we've bred a generation of introverted isolationists. And that's not good enough."

Students at Parnham work to a strict schedule. Their time is structured over the three terms of 40 weeks. They work from 8 am to 5 pm. At 5 pm they have an hour of recreation. At 6 pm the evening meal is served strictly on time. Then at 7 pm they begin work again.

Over a two year period the 18 students (9 to a year) concentrate on both design and business principles. "I know that schools can't really produce designers. That needs a lifetime," John Makepeace said. "But I do feel that art schools generally make design complicated. I feel it can be made much clearer and can be simplified by setting a series of objectives. It is my view that craftsmen are capable of producing useful objects which are a delight to the eye. There is already high technical competence — but sensitivity must be sparked."

John Makepeace's work-shop.

A chair takes shape in the studio.

One of the classrooms at Parnham.

The business studies side of the school is equally important to the success of the craftsman. Beginning with simple office systems, the students go on to study marketing, accountancy, promotion and the way to establish a workshop. They learn to type, to file and keep accurate records.

The school was established in 1977 with assistance from the Crafts Advisory Committee and perhaps more impressively from the European Economic Community.

"Our fund raising was backed by the E.E.C. as a pilot scheme in education for small industry. There is a great concern in Europe to re-utilize rural communities

and so we were immediately acceptable. Here in Dorset the scheme was heaven sent for the area and we have had fantastic support. The house which was previously a private hospital had been on the market for three years. We have set up a charitable trust and have received money and encouragement from industries and private individuals from several European countries including Italy and Holland. £100,000 was raised without difficulty. The fund includes two scholarships, one is for a student in a British School of Art and the other for a local Dorset boy — or girl."

Selecting the students was one of the most difficult tasks at the school. There was an initial rush of applicants from all over the world.

"Our students range in age from 18-28. We interviewed everyone twice, and also asked for a written paper on arts and general knowledge. We also gave them a practical session in the workshop offerig them pattern and constructional problems and looking for a lateral approach in their thinking. There were a number of mature students applying and although we did accept some we found they often had a negative approach. We were looking for positive attitudes. We were disappointed that only very few women applied. Basically I think they don't believe they can earn a living as wood craftsmen. I believe they can. They have a very delicate touch. We do have one girl but we'd like more."

The students seem to enjoy their "stately home". In the living room there is always an interesting exhibition of wood — from the hand of a master craftsman or a sculptor who uses wood. A lot of their food is grown on the estate — for instance when I was there lettuce served in an enormous turned wooden bowl, with tiny fresh tomatoes. It is hoped eventually to make Parnham self-supporting. The students' rooms are pleasant and private, high in the old servants' quarters. They also have several common rooms. They can wander at will in the gardens and the sea is not far away. The nearby towns are as attractive as picture postcards.

Visiting lecturers are invited to Parnham and there are often one day seminars on various aspects of the wood craftsman's problems. Sometimes there are special camping trips when the students learn how to use wet wood, the original "coppice" crafts. Traditional Windsor chairs stem from this kind of knowledge.

The only area at Parnham that is strictly 'out of bounds' for students unless by invitation is the Director's workshop. Once a week the students can come to the workshop for about an hour and a half when they can see the progress of the ten or so jobs in hand.

The craftsmen working for Makepeace in his workshop were content to follow him anywhere just so that they could continue their interesting involvement with the exciting commissions that he accepts. They do not live at Parnham but in nearby villages, arriving at the workshop for a normal working day.

Working craftsmen and students however get on very well although their roles are completely different. The craftsmen are paid to produce John Makepeace's original designs. The students pay £4000 a year to design and make in sequence six major projects. They have no choice and no options, but everything they make belongs to them! As well they are encouraged to seek commissions for themselves. The fees include accommodation, tuition and material.

Parnham House,
Beaminster, Dorset
The East Front and Forecourt

Photography: Ian Dawes.

"Sometimes they exhaust themselves," John Makepeace said. "Sometimes not. Colleges do tend to de-condition students from hard work. They have to come to a realisation that the future is theirs to make. They fill in time sheets to learn the true value of time."

John Makepeace himself came to the craftsman's life through what he regards as a series of discoveries. He was all set to take his place in the academic life of Oxford when he had his first moment of doubt. He decided to by-pass Oxford and spent five years in a workshop. At the end of that time he was invited to make fine furniture. He discovered designing but only after he had learnt the 'how' side of his craft. Later he attended the Oxford Centre for Management Studies, finding a rare delight in the creativity of management.

"I was very out of step with the orthodox world at one stage. It was seen as ridiculous to be a craftsman. Then suddenly the whole climate changed and the craftsman was seen to have a special place in society."

The establishment of the school at Parnham seems a logical step to John Makepeace. He hopes that other similar schools will start in other parts of the world and plans a series of lecture tours in the future. The first of these will hopefully be in Australia during 1979.

One young Australian, Toby Muir Wilson of Forest, Tasmania is already studying at Parnham. His recent one man exhibition at the Tasmanian Design Centre was a sell out. Soon he plans an exhibition in London, but he intends to return to Forest.

"The best part about being at Parnham has been the contact with John Makepeace," he said. "He has so much to give us. The whole idea of this school is ideal. I just hope some of his entrepreneurial skills will brush off on me, because unless a craftsman has some idea about promoting his work he can't look forward to a really successful career." And John is living proof that it is quite possible to combine success and the craftsman's life without compromise.

April Hersey

Exhibition Selection Procedures

In an attempt to work out some recommendations for the correct policy to provide a satisfactory selection procedure for Crafts Council of Australia exhibitions a small working party met last year in Melbourne, at the invitation of Exhibitions Officer Kay Morrissey.

Practising craftsmen and those with long experience in judging and selecting for exhibitions formed the working party.

- Robert Bell; Curator of Craft, Western Australian Art Gallery; Practising craftsman (potter and weaver); President of the Crafts Council of Western Australia.
- David Bradshaw; Director, McClelland Gallery; Practising craftsman (potter); Exhibitions spokesman, Crafts Council of Australia; involved in judging and selecting over several years.
- John Corbett, Practising craftsman (weaver).
- Vic Greenaway; Professional craftsman (potter).
- Marj Richey; Specialist adviser, Crafts Board of the Australia Council. Involved in judging and selecting over many years.
- Also invited but unable to attend where Ken Hood, Assistant director, National Gallery of Victoria, and John Teschendorff, Lecturer in Ceramics at the State College, Melbourne.

Kay Morrissey attended as the convenor of the meeting and Craft Australia sat in to record some of the argument behind the final decisions.

David Bradshaw was invited to be the chairman of the meeting and immediately set out what he felt to be the "basic assumption" behind the working party's brief i.e. to establish a format to satisfy both the selectors and the selected.

Realising that this was possibly idealistic he added that the group should seek "feasible guidelines which would be acceptable."

As a starting point the group discussed the method to be employed in finding craftsmen to exhibit in a major exhibition.

John: I think selection should be an open thing. Everyone should be invited to submit slides — and from that point the process begins.

Marj: Depending on what you are doing of course. For something like the Mayfair Ceramic exhibition that's the only way you can do it. But if you're putting an exhibition together, and you are buying the pieces, you can go by slides, or preferably go to the craftsman's studio and see his work.

David: So do you think that as a general principal for any major exhibition that everyone should be invited to submit slides, and then perhaps submit works as a second point?

Kay: When it's generally advertised that slides are requested should people have to submit new slides to be considered for selection, or should it be stated that the Resource Centre slide library will also be used?

David: Ideally there ought to be some sort of Resource Centre which contains slides of all work being done. We are talking about ideals, so what is needed is a whole spectrum of work, a decade of everyone's work, including their current work. Slides in this quantity should be available somewhere, although at the present time they are not. But if that were the case, do we agree that the first thing a selector should do is actually go through all that material and from it select certain individual craftsmen to submit work, plus more slides of very recent work. Assuming all that exists.

Marj: As it doesn't exist yet I feel you need to get slides of the actual work which is being offered for the exhibition first. Then ideally see the actual pieces before making a decision.

Robert: I would like to suggest that the concept of the exhibition not be fixed before the slides have been examined. I would like to have someone, perhaps the designer, go to the Resource Centre to look at what is available, assuming that there is a good range of work being shown there, and from the inspiration drawn from those slides decide upon a particular theme. This should ensure a concept that represents the work actually being done, and should also prevent anyone who is working in a particular field from being disappointed at not having been considered or included. In fact the concept of the exhibition should start from The Resource Centre situation whether from the actual slides, or from someone touring the country after looking at the slides.

David: I like Robert's point. We're all talking about ideal circumstances at the moment, and so it is ideal to suggest researching the possibilities behind an exhibition concept to see if certain sorts of attitudes and skills are available. Then invite the people.

Robert: You see the thing that makes an exhibition good is the choice of participants. It's who you put together that makes the challenge. It seems to me that you can conceive good exhibitions before the work starts coming in by who you decide to put together, to pit against each other. But perhaps that is getting away from the whole concept of general craft exhibitions.

Vic: No I think you are right. I mean it's always been the case that craftsmen go to a gallery and suggest an exhibition and then go back to the workshop and produce it. Whereas often in the case of fine arts, the work is done first and then the gallery is approached about a show of work. It seems to be a backward thing with craftsmen.

David: I can't agree more. I think the craftsmen have a very amateur approach. If I ran a commercial gallery I wouldn't have an exhibition of anyone's work unless I saw it beforehand.

Kay: I would just like to clarify the ideas of the meeting. When an exhibition is announced, you invite craftsmen to submit slides. Right. Now should we still consider people who do not send slides? Could we for example use the Resource Centre slide library, which has a fairly comprehensive range, for those who do not send specific slides.

Marj: If you know someone's work is good you don't necessarily have to see slides.

Kay: But that relies on you keeping their names filed in your memory. And that is unreliable.

Marj: But you can't leave them out just because they have no slides.

David: I think we should go back to the first statement. Everyone in a particular field is invited to submit slides. After these are looked at specific people will also be invited to send work or have work available for showing. In this way slides are seen as a preliminary

thing and work as another step. The pieces shown may not be selected but they say more about a craftsman than can be shown on a slide. This is of course an ideal situation and perhaps we should look at modifications that could apply to a real situation. I realise it is costly to have someone look at work in the workshop but perhaps we should consider this. One of the most costly components of putting on a major exhibition may in fact be to have someone moving around, as Murray Walker did before the Colonial Crafts exhibition. Maybe that is the recommendation that should be made.

Robert: So many exhibitions are ill conceived and produced on a shoe string. It would be a good exercise to cost out the components of all the best exhibitions that have been in Australia recently. We'd soon get a very cold hard idea of how much quality costs, and then we might not rush into exhibitions unnecessarily.

David: It might be that we should be recommending fewer exhibitions. Perhaps it is better to spend a lot more on one decent exhibition.

Robert: I feel there are too many wide open group exhibitions. I think these do little for the crafts. I really don't see any reason why jewellery and pottery, weaving and enamelling, paper making and Lord knows what else, all has to be placed together as craft. No-one would dream of putting together an exhibition of sculpture, painting and printmaking or present ballet and opera all in the one performance.

David: Should selector and designer be the same person?

Kay: Is the ideal to pay selectors rather than expect them to do this in an honorary capacity as they usually do now?

Robert: The most important people to pay are those who conceive the exhibition.

Vic: Perhaps selectors could be re-imbursed for the loss of either salary or for time lost from the workshop while selecting for these kind of funded exhibitions.

David: Time is a problem. It takes a number of months to put on an exhibition and shopping around for pieces would have to occur the year before the exhibition. Often the exhibition is not finally mounted for months after the work has come in. Some contemporary craft exhibitions are several years out of date when they finally go on show. This is another reason for employing someone to work on an exhibition as a selector. Working consistently for a set period of time would be much better than for one person to spend a day a week over a twelve month period. Everyone's work should be viewed, ideally, and so this can probably be done through slides.

Vic: I would suggest that a recommendation comes from this meeting that professional craftsmen make sure they are represented by slides. Slides are obviously the thing of the future. Craftsmen seem to be quite oblivious to the fact that exhibitions can be selected from the Resource Centre in Sydney. To actually send a piece to a central place for evaluation would cost $60 in freight alone. It would be better to invest that money in slides. You can submit ten or twelve slides for that cost. We are looking for professionalism in this country. I feel we need to put across our point very strongly about slides. They are essential for the craftsman. Just as his books must balance and he may need to go through four or five accountants before he finds the right one, so might he have to go through several photographers to get the right man.

Robert: Craftsmen should be encouraged to send specific slides of the work intended for the exhibition. There should also be a continuous build up of slides in Resource Centres. Suppose you were invited to select a show ten years from now. Suppose no-one knows anyone. The selector should be able to go to a room filled with filing cabinets and have the opportunity to look at 25,000 slides to find the right show, and the right people for it. I am interested in researching the concept.

David: I think there is a great importance there. It is interesting that we always look at proposals for overseas exhibitions coming to Australia, but within Australia we seem to start in the middle. Perhaps people should be encouraged to make exhibition proposals to craft authorities. It should be quite valid to be able to apply for a grant to research the possibility of an exhibition.

Kay: Then in each case it comes down to the provision of specific slides of work. I know this is very important. Take the Lausanne exhibition. This is very, very competitive with two or three thousand people submitting a file. From these files less than 100 people are invited to submit work to the exhibition. Professional photography and presentation of the file is the important do-or-die part of the exercise.

David: The work itself is the final point of decision. Do we agree that wherever possible this should also be seen? Specific slides but work as well when possible?

Kay: That would seem to be ideal.

David: Then let us think about the make-up of the selection committee. What kind of experience is relevant for participants?

Vic: It's a matter of past performances. We need people who have been round long enough to have some idea of the techniques involved, although of course they can call on technicians.

John: I feel at least three people should be involved and preferably with a total art background. A craft background is not necessary. That kind of expertise is always available. I have had some horrific experiences on selection committees. They can be very biased.

Robert: The local situation you mean. I suppose the outcome of this meeting we are holding is to help people in those situations. In a small community so many people want to be included. If they are left out it leads to all kinds of bickering. I think it is important that a selection committee should not be made up of local people.

John: I feel a selection committee is important. I feel they should be asked by what criteria they have judged the work.

Robert: We did an interesting experimental thing in Western Australia when we had a mixed exhibition selected on a score card system. Dry questions like: "Is it functional? Does it exploit the materials?" Scoring from 1-10. Everything getting say 75 points was placed aside for the exhibition and then this appalling exhibition resulted.

Kay: That's interesting because the A.C.T. favour the score card system and want to exhibit with the card beside the object. Points for aesthetics and function.

Robert: Our scheme was designed to help the selectors and protect them from criticism, to be democratic in a small town situation so that all personality clashes were avoided. But we got a terrible selection of work and we couldn't show it. But I think it all points up that group shows are bad news. Even one media like fibre can provide difficulties. At one end you have traditional embroiderers and weavers and at the other the very extreme people sort of throwing ropes round rooms.

David: You are also close to the problem of the club show, the type of show which is inflated into being regarded as an exhibition when it is not much more than a show-and-tell thing at kindergarten. It is an opportunity for members of a club to show their work.

Robert: That's true. But even a well conceived group show does little to help the individual artist. I feel the whole concept is wrong.

David: Getting back to the composition of the selection committees. I have noted Robert's point about the selection committee selecting without thought about the final exhibition, selecting in isolation. I can see the value of selector and designer working closely together. I've also noted John's point about having three selectors. In that situation there would of course have to be compromises made.

Robert: If one person is to do the job I think it would work providing that it is advertised that this person is selecting. Then craftsmen have knowledge of what to expect, what they are getting into by offering for this exhibition. Otherwise the craftsman walks into a big black hole. Definitions should be given to the craftsman as to size and requirements and to the selector from the concept people —.a frame-work on which to base his selection.

Kay: How do we select people to do the selecting? One person? Three people? Local? Someone from outside the community? A broad arts background or a technician?

Vic: People with experience, capable of recognising what is about to happen, and with a wide spectrum of knowledge.

Kay: Do I understand that you favour having non-craftsmen as selectors?

Vic: I think sometimes craftsmen because of their technical competence and control are not always open to other interpretations — for instance the fabric weaver who cannot really be receptive to experimental fibre work.

Kay: Do you see three people as ideal?

Vic: Well I wouldn't go below three. I would not have one person only.

Kay: What we are discussing here will be passed on to all kinds of organisations, and hopefully at least some variation of these ideas for selection will be used.

Robert: I know I keep hammering the point that I don't think anyone should consider doing an exhibition unless they can really feel confident that as an exhibition it has some kind of meaning. An exhibition should not just fill a calendar space. Can we make this point?

David: I think to wrap this up — we've talked about a concept devisor for an exhibition, and the importance of linking the concept person with a knowledgeable group of say three selectors, who do not necessarily have to be craftsmen, or from the local area, but who have within their range of expertise a broad knowledge of the arts. And additionally we must note Robert's plea for the demise of the mixed craft show and for a more cautious approach to putting on exhibitions, which perhaps means fewer but better and more meaningful exhibitions. Now we have to look at the question of judges.

Kay: Yes I want to differentiate between selecting for an exhibition and selecting an award or prize piece from an exhibition if we can.

David: Let us first assume that the exhibition is already together before the judging occurs.

Kay: Yes that's an important factor isn't it? The exhibition or display should already be set up and each piece shown to advantage.

Vic: May I say that I feel strongly that the judge should not be part of the selection committee. He should walk in with a fresh outlook and should not have been involved in the long process of selection. It is horrific when you have to go through countless pieces and agonise over selection and then turn round and make another overall decision to find the best piece. Your judgement is jeopardised by being far too close to the work.

Vic: It's the reaction of the judge that's important. There is no way his choice is going to decide the best piece because it is really just the reaction of the one person who has been invited to make a choice.

Kay: In that case how do you select the judge?

Marj: I think we've covered the type of person in our description of the selectors.

Vic: Someone who can walk in and say: "That's it." It could be a dangerous choice to have a craftsman who is practising in the same field — you may get someone with a passion for shino glazes for instance who will not look at anything else with much interest. But we are talking about judges and we haven't discussed whether we agree that prizes are a good thing.

Kay: My feedback is that prizes are out.

David: The book token syndrome.

Vic: I have mixed feelings but on the whole think prizes are a good thing. They tend to inject a touch of competition. As long as people look on the prize just for the prize's sake and not as being indicative of the best for the year. I feel it should be a lighthearted thing.

Robert: I think we have to accept that prizes exist and that winning them is a thing people like to do. I don't think they should be high priorities for the Crafts Council. The Council would always be better advised to organise a really good exhibition which promotes craftsmen. That is the kind of gift that money can't buy.

David: But if prizes and awards are to be made then we recommend that an independent judge with a broad art knowledge, preferably from outside the organisation, and not involved with setting up and selecting the exhibition, should be the person to make an award or select a prize-winning object.

Discussion extracted by April Hersey from a verbatim report of the meeting.

Sicilian Puppets

Three years ago, Giovanni Bronzini passed a few evenings carving the character Pinnochio for his young son. The child took the piece to school, and that afternoon came home with a note from the teacher asking if he would consider carving other figures around a story that the class could produce. Giovanni carved the puppets, and so began three years of constant work at the art of puppet making. Giovanni came to Australia from Palermo five years ago. He remembers clearly his first puppet show. When he was a child of six or seven, an uncle came to stay, and each evening, before the children were put to bed, the uncle would bring out his repetoire of puppets and play through the allegories and fables that he too had learnt as a child. From that time, Giovanni has been fascinated with puppets. He was apprenticed at the age of nine and worked for twelve years under a master carver and cabinet maker.

At the time he was carving the set of puppets for Pinnochio, he met up with Amando Friolo. Amando had arrived in Australia a year before Giovanni, from Turin. In Italy he had been a machinest with a large industrial firm, and in Australia was working as a rigger. Amando too, remembered the puppets of his childhood, and proposed to Giovanni that they set to work to produce a cast of puppets for the traditional theme of Orlando. The cast for Pinnochio came to thirty seven characters and were of the marionette design; for Orlando, they chose the customary Sicilian puppets. Sicilian puppets are one of the few surviving forms of folk puppetry, and in Europe are in ever decreasing numbers. Giovanni recalls that many of the

Orlando Furioso (Orlando Mad) whose madness is caused by the faithlessness of Angelica. It is traditional that Orlando is crosseyed.

Assistant to the puppeteers, Susi Midgley, holds the fickle Angelica, daughter of Galafron, King of Cathay.

Giovanni Bronzino with Angelica and a paladin.

Amando Friolo's fine metalwork in the armour of the three suitors. 0.3 mm brass and copper hand beaten.

The Moorish knight of Spain mounted on a black charger; a single operator handles both pieces — the weight of the horse is taken by being hooked to a rail.

Agramant, emperor of Africa and supreme ruler of the infidels. He is said to be a descendant of Alexander the Great. He and his hosts are Charlemagne's foremost opponent. His tunic is leather with brass studs; the mask of the lion is beaten from copper.

Charlemagne: the traditional rod-puppet has mechanics that allow the sword to be drawn from the scabbard and used in absolutely realistic swordplay. Much of Sicilian puppetry is set against the background of the Christian wars against Islam.

Angelica and her father Galafron. Costumes by Giovanni Bronzino.

travelling players sold their puppets during the last war, as the price for their metal was good and the times especially hard for people of that trade. Today the prices for the puppets are extremely high in Italy — as high as a $1,000 a piece in some cases. Giovanni and his family remember the shows as being regular and seasonal entertainments for the people, so many of whom were illiterate. The few remaining troupes find times hard. In competition with the countless instant amusements, they derive their income from a minority of the tourist market.

Here too times have been hard. Both men support families and have full time employment, whilst spending at least four to five hours a day working on the puppets. For the last two years they have made their workshop in a hut at the Addison Road Community Centre — a disused army barracks in Marrickville. Here Amando has set up a strange variety of bench tools for their work: a power saw is improvised around the motor of a household polisher; the buffing machine is put together from the parts of commercial washing machines. Even the ancient Bluebird sewing machine, that Giovanni uses for the costumes, has been restored by Amando after being salvaged from a dump. They have made thirty five puppets for their production of Orlando. Each piece weighs between fifteen and twenty kilos, and is half life size made meticulously close to traditional detail. Amando calculates that it takes the two of them, at twelve hours a day, seven days to complete one of the knights or paladins for the play. In design, they are basically rod puppets and have a fairly characteristic style of action. The body is of wood with a padded chest; the action of the legs is stiff and depends on the handling of the whole figure rather than on leg strings, which this style of puppet does not have. Control is centred in a strong iron head rod held, or hooked from above stage.

The story of Orlando is set against a background of Christianity's war against Islam, and consequently involves many scenes of combat; almost all of the characters are armed — usually with a sword: in the standard design for the Sicilian puppet, the hand is bolted through the gauntlet to the sword, whilst the shield arm is manipulated through a cord system — the centre rod during sword play being clipped to a rail. Amando's design perfects this: the sword hand is free for other movement and gesture, and when ready for combat, is locked by a trigger device to the sword by the operator. At half scale, with these mechanisms and solid steel, the fight scenes are really impressive.

Amando and Giovanni recently finished their cast for Orlando and have taken it on tour with Pinnochio. With a two tonne truck and their apprentice — Susi Midgley, they headed north, first to play southern Queensland, then back through northern New South Wales.

Nicholas Pounder

Nicholas Pounder is a poet who enjoys carpentry. He is interested in both materials and methods. A book of his poetry 'The Condition of the Skeleton' will be published this year.

Photography: Oliver Strewe.

The Moorish knight of Spain.

William Ricketts

1

2

William Ricketts

It's morning in the Dandenongs. Giant forest eucalypts murmur with a breeze, shedding their dew. Parrots flash crimson through green. Somewhere there is a soft call of a forest bird.

Past the tall ferns a man sweeps leaves from the forest pathway — it's William Ricketts.

"Forty-two years ago I entered this forest, and as I did,

"I'm expressing the deepest seated religious feelings of what the sacred ceremonies and songs meant to the Aborigines. It was a dramatic performance in the Australian bush whereby the Aborigines through sacred songs and ceremonies were paying back to the first creative spirit his religious reverence for life — that life is what came through the first creative spirit — and so the Aborigines came to the very deep understanding that in everything that is life is the law written." (pictures 1, 2, 5, 6, 8)

The Brute Australia. "This thinking speaking creature with a human mind has no vision and can only aspire to more mental comforts a servant to its blundering appetites.

"One glance at the so called progress and the use of poisons and fire and science is enough to understand the cataclysm of violence that awaits us at the end of the present road we are now upon." (picture 4).

4

5

6

Earthly Mother

8

one thing only, gently and silently came to rest before my wandering eyes and searching soul. It was the realisation that somehow I was related to the pure water gushing from a silent spring in the side of the mountain. And the key to this compelling and beautiful mystery of life is now entrusted into my hands."

He's a smallish man, Billy Ricketts, with the bright burning eyes of a crusader, an 'artist' with a message. Old in years but agile and young.

The terms 'artist' and 'sculptor' are treated by Ricketts with contempt. He's had no formal training but feels his talents came from elsewhere. "No man has been here to influence me so there must be a higher influence directing me".

Of his past he says little. "I tried to be a musician." And there it ends.

For Ricketts the past is unimportant, since the 'higher influence' was made clear to him. Now he pursues his major themes, "In everything that is life is the law written." He works to show us the interrelationship of all life, and the spiritual flow of all life. All life is one. And to show his passionate concern for wildlife.

Again a bird calls softly. A leaf rustles — and falls. Water from the spring skips over small stones and babbles with life. There is a great feeling of calm all around.

Ricketts is a man of complex beliefs. He believes he's an incarnate of the ancient Vedic Rishi of India, and he believes the "first Australians", the aborigines, also came from India. Although Ricketts talks of 'God' and religion, he is contemptuous of organised religions. His God is a one universal supreme being, whose spirituality is everywhere and from whom all life flows.

Although he didn't know why at the time, most of the direction of his life has been a result of the inspiration of the mountain spring.

"The very thought of the water image has sustained me. The meaning of unity within me was to go still deeper when I made my first contact with my aboriginal people in Central Australia. Long before I met them, I had already become the aboriginal. My life is as a man of two worlds, pulsating in one world.

"Anything that leads people away from the earth and its wonderful meaning is false. Beyond all man's institutions and organisations is a timeless state of being, an aboriginal state of being that is indeed the endless tide of light flowing ever from Alchera (aboriginal creation). Projecting his illumination the aboriginal enters into communion with all natural forms and creatures, fire and water ever-flowing from Alchera; and thus we see the golden thread of culture moving through all creation."

On his trip to Central Australia many years ago, most of the models for his Sanctuary works were made.

His empathy with the aborigines can be seen in his works. Ricketts himself is portrayed complete with ritual scars. "It's symbolic that I'm in spirit with the aborigines. I'm fully aware of my own spirituality as they are in regards to their own place in the Universe. Now my life is the link between my aboriginal people and modern man.

"Because the aboriginal people were all their lives so profoundly engaged in the continuity of creation, they discovered within themselves, extrasensory intuitions or perceptions that were spiritual. This is a most deep-seated culture, because the aboriginal was known to all earth life and he knew all of it — so there was no such thing as being alone. All this, that the white man has lost and is losing, must be regained if he is to endure."

The works of Ricketts are becoming widely known both here and overseas. He is represented in the Museum in Tel Aviv and has made two overseas trips.

In 1968, his wildlife crusade took him and his works to New York and in 1970 he went to India.

It was on this trip that the 'higher force', the whole inspiration of the mountain spring, his spiritual oneness with the aborigines and all life was made known to him. Ricketts says his work was seen by Dr Pai (Secretary of the Sukrtindra Oriental Research Institute) at Pondicherry. This Indian Holy man wrote to the Indian Government saying that Ricketts was the reincarnation of the Vedic Rishi and should receive any help he needed. For Ricketts the 'higher force' was finally revealed.

In Ricketts' forest, a moss covered tribal elder gives strength and inner knowledge from the rock, an arm circles the faces of children, Earthly Mother. The figures are extensions of the forest and rocks where they sit — radiating their still calm.

"I use soft clay — squeezed into the forms you see here. It's fired to a high temperature where the work becomes a molten state. It has the same hardness as the rocks."

Children rise all around from the rocks — awaiting a new earth — a spiritual earth revitalised. For Ricketts the answer lies in the future and the children. The childlike inspiration of the aborigines; that same creative and spiritual flow that children have before they are forced into the narrow conformity of man's institutions.

The calm of sunset filters through. The forest is still and quiet. Animals and children huddle in peace waiting for the land of vision. The 'childlike' inspirations of Ricketts are all around us.

He is walking up the steep forest path at an amazingly agile pace. I ask him his age. He turns quickly. And smiles.

"I'm eight. Tomorrow I might be nine. I'm just gaining my strength."

Ross Bray

Ross Bray is a journalist working with the rural broadcasting division of the A.B.C.

Congress of Ceramic Studies — Faenza

To go from the busy hive of activity surrounding the World Crafts Conference in Kyoto, Japan with its thousands of eager delegates from more than a hundred countries, to the congress of ceramic studies in the quiet town of Faenza in northern Italy was like stepping from an airport transit centre into the Great Hall of a university.

The analogy is really quite accurate because the Kyoto conference was held in four city buildings plus the international conference hall in suburban Kyoto and as art critic Amaury Saint-Gilles wrote in the Mainichi Daily News "offered a bewildering array of conflicting lectures and meets — divided into 17 groupings each of which had a prepared schedule covering every hour of the next three and a half conference days." The Faenza conference which was held to celebrate the centenary of the birth of the founder of one of the finest ceramic museums in the world — Gaetano Ballardini — was concerned with art history, museumology, and archaeology. In fact very few practising potters attended the congress. I was the only person who continued on to the Faenza conference from Kyoto.

Those potters who did come to Faenza tended to have a look of slight bewilderment. For Faenza has been an industrial pottery town for a thousand years. The anxieties that tend to beset the 20th century potter (art versus craft, craft in industry, crafts as a livelihood) were all solved long ago in Faenza. The narrow streets which soon give way to the hilly countryside are lined with studios and little factories turning out the famous majolica of the region. Faenza is very old and steeped in its traditions. It has provided the world of pottery with the word "faience" which was derived from the name of the town.

Horse-chestnuts of venerable age line the main town square. They were busily bursting their pods like machine guns all over the sudden influx of serious scholars who descended upon the town and walked in the square between bouts of looking at the 32 rooms of treasured pottery in the museum and the annual exhibition in its special hall.

There is so much to see in Faenza that one tends to become overwhelmed. As well as modern work the Museum houses ancient Italian majolica, rustic and pre-historic pottery from many regions of Italy as well as Renaissance work. But it also contains a magic collection of ceramics from the Middle East, China and Japan. Many great collectors have presented their collections to the Museum at Faenza, and the richness and diversity of the work is astonishing.

A ceramic school was added to the Museum in 1915. Beginning as an evening course it is now an established art institute with both artistic and technical sections, providing complete courses of 8 years duration. A laboratory for chemical research is attached to the school, and there is a very important course in ceramic restoration. The Gaetana Ballardini State Institute for Ceramics is free to all students and it is open to scholars from overseas. Part-time courses are also available.

The delegates to the Congress who came from all over the world gathered to listen to learned discussions from some of the great ceramic scholars of our time. Henry-Pierre Fourest, Head Keeper of the National Museum of Ceramics, Sevres, discussed the great traditions of Sevres; Andrea Emiliani, Director of the National Picture Gallery, Bologna spoke on ceramic education. Two colleagues, Angela Donati, Professor of Eipgraphy and Roman Antiquity, and Valeria Righini, Professor of Roman History, both from the University of Bologna, lectured on pottery inscriptions of antiquity and the remains of pottery production from Roman times. Jay D. Frierman, University of California gave a lecture on Ceramic Archaeometry, objectivity in ceramic studies and ceramic education. Bredo L. Granjean, Keeper of the Museum of the Porcelain Royal Manufactory at Copenhagen, gave a paper on examples of Italian influence on Danish ceramics, Johanna Lessman of the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum of Braunschweig spoke on Medicean porcelain and John Mallet, Keeper of the Department of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London gave a fascinating talk about a majolica painter who worked in Pesaro in the 16th century. David Whitehouse, director of the British Post Graduate School in Rome discussed proto-majolica, and Hugo Blake, from the University of Lancaster spoke about archaic majolica.

There were also several informative lectures about Gaetano Ballardini and other aspects of the Faenza legend.

Instantaneous translating equipment was available for all those attending the congress. The main languages being Italian, French, English and German. At the end of each day comments were invited from the floor and this gave many participants the opportunity to give smaller 10 minute lectures on a variety of subjects.

Dennis Parks, a practising potter from the United States who has written a critical evaluation of the 36th Concorso Internazionale della Ceramica d'Arte for Craft Australia sat through most of the lectures in a state of awed fascination. Writing for Ceramic Review he said: "I was led to a linguistic conclusion . . . that which is boring is not necessarily worthless. The information was delivered like verbal footnotes to a text you had never read. For this reason there was freshness as well as mystery in what was said. Watching the slides historians take and hearing where an archaeologist places his values awakens you to how unique is the potter's view of clay and how equally narrow."

A side trip to a superb villa in the nearby hills gave the delegates a glimpse of the past. Here in the midst of formal gardens surrounded in turn by vineyards laden with ripe green grapes, lived one of the 'ceramic families' of Faenza. 'The old countess' was not well enough to receive us but her grand-daughter graciously opened the door allowing a few of us at a time to walk back into history and to see the 'best pieces' produced by the Faenza factories over hundreds of years; plates and bowls, dinner services, incredible ceilings designed by Della Robbia, statues and miniatures, some ornate, some brilliantly simple and all carried out by artisan potters, the descendents of whom are just as busy today in the proud industrial tradition of the town of Faenza.

April Hersey

Rita Pagony, Hungary.
16 cm

Alena Lorencova, W. Germany.

John Teschendorff, Australia.
37 x 45 cm

Glauco Bertozzi, Italy.
h. 20 cm

Gillian Lowndes, Great Britain.
h. 17 cm

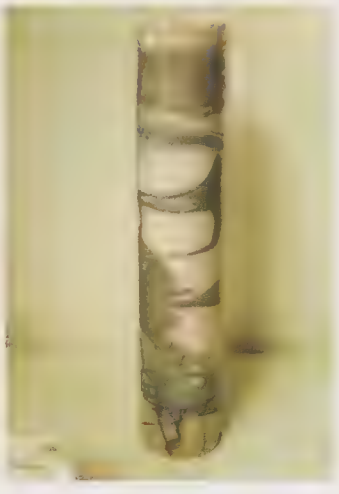
Olive Bishop, Australia.
40 cm x 50 cm

h. 35 cm
Pierre Baey, France (1st Prize)

h. 72 cm
Mirko Orlandini, Belgium.

h. 26 cm
Maria Kuczynska, Poland (Gold Medal Award).

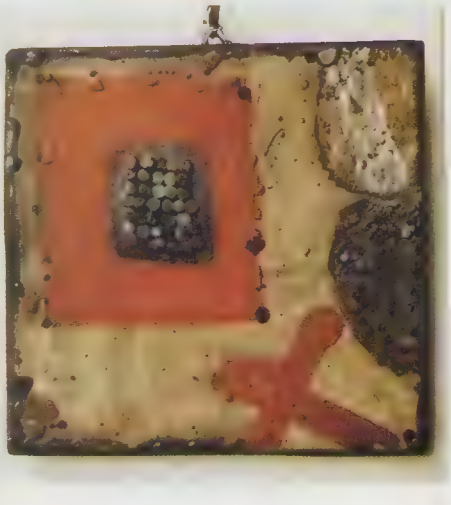
h. 46 cm
Paul Dorrschack-Hanke, W. Germany.



Photography: Dennis Parks.

Adriano Leverone, Italy
(1st Prize purchase award).
h. 24 cm

Vula Gunela, Greece.
91 x 52 cm



31 x 31 cm
Max Sollner, W. Germany.

36th International Competition of Artistic Ceramics

This is the oldest, and considered by many to be the most prestigious, annual international competition for ceramists. From 1151 pieces submitted to this year's exhibition, the jury accepted only 519. Those selected were the works of 215 artist/potters from 34 countries.

The jury's taste was broad. The installation in the galleries evidenced a variety of styles from simple utilitarian vessels, anthropomorphic sculptures, monoliths and epigraphic monuments to conceptual wall maps, photographs that would presumably lead on to a natural clay deposit. The impact of the individual works also covered a wide aesthetic, from subtle and fresh to the overstated and banal. The jury seemed to have deliberated with the intention of creating a panoramic overview of what is being made today, rather than focusing on the more personal, narrow view of excellence.

The jury:

Veniero Lomardi, Mayor of Faenza (Chairman).

Professor Giuseppe Liverani, Director of the Museum.

Professor Carmelo Cappello, Sculptor, Milan.

Viastmil Kventensky, Ceramist, Czechoslovakia.

Colette Save, Editor of *L'Atelier des Métiers d'Art*, Paris

Two political questions arose to haunt the museum. Some viewers joked, others were seriously concerned by suspicions that: (1) In selection, the jurors favoured Italian entries; (2) In installation, the staff was partial toward works from the Eastern Bloc countries. Though these charges were somewhat petty, unfortunately they could not be entirely disregarded.

The presence of three Italians on the jury probably had little to do with the fact that 20% of the artists chosen were their countrymen. More likely the prohibitive cost of shipping from abroad limited the number of foreign entries, and consequently the pool from which the jurors had to choose. Still, with such a strong, hometown flavor the international taste of the exhibition was less authentic.

One potter, after touring the museum commented, "You're about as likely to witness a balanced show in Faenza as you are the ordination of a non-Italian Pope." Events proved him half wrong.

What was displayed was a fairly representative view of different approaches to clay from various countries; an attempt that is not made on an annual basis anywhere else in the world. It was an educational, rather than an inspirational exhibit.

The second sticky question was: did the museum staff dabble in politics when they were deciding on locations for different countries? Walking from room to room there was no obvious logical sequence of nations, geographical or alphabetical, neither were the countries rigidly grouped by political theory. Probably only by accident, but in fact, the U.S.S.R., Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and the Democratic Republic of Germany were displayed well spaced on open pedestals in sunny rooms. The English-speaking countries did not fare so well. Entries from Great Britain, New Zealand, U.S.A. and Puerto Rico were crowded into poorly lighted, small glass cases in a windowless hallway. ("Was the listing of Puerto Rico as a country evidence of support for their separatist movement?") Cold war paranoia lingered with some of the crowd.

Australian ceramics were the English-speaking exception. Exhibited to advantage, on low white stands in one of the large rooms, with windows, were the works of six contemporaries:

Christine O'Loughlin was awarded a purchase prize for her majolica tableau of tiles and marbles. The other five artists were: John Teschendorff with standing slabs reminiscent of desert landscapes; Gregory Wain's wall plaques depicting humorous, soft pornography; Olive Bishop's low fired, Popish recreations of folded military uniforms; and both Greg Daly and Alan Peascod with a group of thrown and distorted vessels.

All reservations put aside, no potter could wander through this show without being impressed by quite a number of the works. High among my favorites were (Hungary) Rita Pagony's mysterious, veiled, porcelain teapot; (West Germany) Max Söllner's square, wall plaque — a painting with glaze and fired nails; (Greece) Vula Gunela's massive slabs with imprints of oversized clothes; and (West Germany) Alena Lorencova's thrown cylinder sitting on its side — a hard fired object still projecting the sensuousness of wet clay.

Dennis Parks

Dennis Parks resides in the abandoned mining town of Tuscarora (population: 16), in the mountains of northeastern Nevada, U.S.A. His works were represented at Faenza in 1967 (Gold Medal), 1974 and 1978. Articles by him have appeared in *Craft Horizons, Ceramics Monthly, Ceramic Review* (London), *New Zealand Potter* and *Studio Potter*. Currently he is writing a text, *Raw Glazing & Tales of Oil Firings*, to be published by Charles Scribner's Sons, N.Y.C.

Tactile Story for Blind Children

Five full time and two part time students of Western Australia's Mount Lawley College of Advanced Education graduate diploma course in art education worked under the direction of Jenny Allen during 1978 to provide a mural "specifically for blind children to touch."

The panel is a free-standing form, composed of four interlocking steel and mesh panels, standing nearly six feet high and meandering in an S curve for 12 feet. A braille version of the story with instructions for the blind children to discover by touch what it was all about, added to the experience.

Robbie, partially blind, finds the bunyip.

However the little fairy tale of a boy who meets an emu, a goanna, a bunyip and eventually Ned Kelly in the Australian bush is all three dimensional. There is a clay tile path along which little hands can move to find the tall emu made of hand-spun black wool, knotted and knitted into a sculptural form. The beak makes a clacking sound. There is a nest and an egg made of raku fired clay. There is a hairy, prickly bunyip, a tree with roots, a trunk and branches, and a softly padded background of bush behind the main story. Ned Kelly's armour is made of metal discs which rattle and his face mask is steel. The little goanna is made of tooled leather. At the end of the path are some hammers and the blind child is told that he can play a tune on the tiles all the way back to the beginning of the path.

Jenny Allen who as well as being a lecturer in art education at Mt Lawley is a specialist in textiles and art for handicapped children commented that at the end of the story, everyone is happy. "The blind child will have had a narrative, knowing and feeling experience."

April Hersey

Joanne reaches up to Ned Kelly's mask.

Joanne totally blind finds the egg.

Finished panel.

Tanija makes the tree of dyed sisal.

Jan tries out Ned Kelly, for size.

Lacing on the tiles.

Joy pads the emu of crocheted spun black wool.

Lucille and Di tackle the spinning of the wool for the emu.

Jan finishes her bunyip.

Gallery Section
Second Skin '78

Tie-dye on pulled cotton with added stitchery by Pat Grummet.

The increasing popularity of batik as a wearable art form was evident in the Second Skin '78 exhibition at Canberra's Beaver Galleries. Ten of the 20 contributing craftsmen and women displayed batik garments. A total of 57 batik pieces in a collection of 94 individually crafted wearables.

Sixty-two garments from the range, which included sophisticated tie-dye, patchwork, applique and embroidery, hand painting, screen printing, handspun and woven wear were paraded on opening night before an enthusiastic audience.

The participating craftspeople showed a keen sense of high fashion complemented by expertise in their mediums. Natural fibres of silk, soft cottons and voile, silk shantung, velvet and pure wool were used with flair in flattering, unstructured designs.

The Second Skin is an annual event, '78 being its third, and largest showing. It is a unique showcase of Australian wearable craft. It offers craftsmen and women an opportunity to create garments with a lavishness of detail they would perhaps not normally attempt in their day to day production. The challenge is taken enthusiastically and the results display a unit of art, craft and function readily appreciated by craftspeople and the public alike.

Kerrin Madden

Batik butterfly cape with tassled hood by Margaret Goddard.

Quilted Batik silk short cape by Kathy Berney.

Back view of Jenni Dudley's caftan shows to advantage the controlled fullness of the caftan and careful placing of the applique.

Jenni Dudley's quilted silk Batik 'japonica' bolero.

Townsville Pacific Festival Fibre Awards

The Fibres and Fabric Group of Townsville was formed in 1975 and since that time has acquired some 90 members and held four major exhibitions. The Townsville Pacific Festival Fibre Exhibition held in June each year offers the major fibre awards in Queensland and attracts entries from all over the State as well as from other parts of Australia.

This year Deanna Conti, a well known weaver from North Queensland selected a wide variety of creative fibre work when she judged the festival competition. Although the prize money is relatively low (acquisitive $250 and non-acquisitive $400) the competition is keen. The Pacific Festival Award of $250 went to 'Aerial Blues' by Marie Therese Duff of Townsville and the Planet Homes Award of $100 to 'Amber Growth' by Eileen Rigby of Townsville. Other winners were Christine Upton of Tamworth, Barbara Bracken of Townsville, Prudence Neal of Sydney and Fay Patterson of Townsville. Special awards restricted to members of the group went to Elaine Olafson and Vicki Rosendahl. Highly commended were June Oliver and Pauline Blyth.

F. Patterson

"Aerial Blues" — collage, Marie Therese Duff, Townsville.

"Garden Rhapsody" machine embroidery Sandra Burchill Malanda.

"Gum Nut" — Batik, Christine Upton, Tamworth.

"Amber Growth" Embroidery, Eileen Rigby, Townsville.

Peter Kingston

Peter Kingston's Chess Set

Peter Kingston's whimsical chess set complete with H.R.H. Elizabeth II plus corgis, Ginger Meggs, Joan Sutherland, Edna Everage and Norman Gunston was recently exhibited at Sydney's Hogarth Galleries. Described as wooden cut-out miniature affectionettes the chess set was a natural outcome of Kingston's cartoonist background.

Born in Sydney in 1943, Peter Kingston graduated in Arts and Architecture from the University of New South Wales. He was a cartoonist for "Tharunka" and "Oz" magazine and had his first exhibition with Michael Glasheen and John Allen at the Clune Galleries in 1962. He made a series of movies including "Dr Kingston's Bookcase" and "The Phanta" and travelled through Europe, India, Egypt and America, returning to Australia in time to take part in the Yellow House Exhibition. He joined Richard Liney and Martin Sharp in painting murals at Luna Park and then created his first "affectionettes" with Miguel Andres and Jo Collard. In 1975 he exhibited with Garry Shead at the Powell Street Gallery. In 1976 he was included in "The Ocker Funk" show at Watters Gallery with Terry Stanton and Richard Liney. His first show of miniature affectionettes was at Ace's Art Shop in Sydney in 1976.

April Hersey

Photography: Oliver Strewe

The Queen, Prince Philip and the corgi versus, Joan Sutherland, Edna Everage, Norman Gunston, Ginger Meggs and the rest make for a highly original game of chess.

Design Section: Free Pulled Work

Some people are frightened of pulled work because the patterns look complicated, the material used is often fine and they feel they cannot see to count accurately. These points are true for formal work but beautiful and interesting effects can be obtained by *pulling without counting.*

A loosely woven material without overlocked threads is required. Wools and linens from curtain departments, cottons, synthetic dress or curtain materials are all suitable as long as the threads move easily. It need not be an evenweave material — in fact a slubbed material will add interest to the results.

Working threads should usually be nearly the same thickness as those of the background although thicker ones can be added for variety. The colour of these threads should be close to that of the background so that the use of contrasting colour does not distract the eye from the new shapes made by the pulling. These new patterns are formed from the contrast of spaces with more solid areas. Also, the stitches in pulled work tend to be rather disappointing and contrasting threads would accentuate this. A tapestry needle is used so that the threads of the background material are not split by a sharp point. A frame should be used so that a good tension can be obtained and the threads can more easily be seen and followed. A round or tambour frame (with the inner ring bound with strips of calico or finger bandage for firmer holding and prevention of marking of the material) is sufficient for experimenting but a larger rectangular frame would be better for larger pieces.

At first — just play with the material by pushing threads aside with fingers and needles. Isolate any slubbed threads; make holes by pushing a pencil or knitting needle between threads and moving it about, let threads wander across from one hole to another. This gives an idea of how to get contrasts — the 'heavy' areas where the threads have been pushed close together, the 'light' areas made by the holes and the 'medium' weight of the background. This can be seen in the first photograph. No stitches have been used and the slubby material gave a far more interesting effect than an evenweave. Obviously this method would be of no practical use as the threads would not stay in position in wear or washing. However, that sampler has been carried round rather carelessly all over Australia for the past three years without changing so with the right material and in a non-wear situation, it could be useful. It could be used to vary the background in a panel worked on a loose weave.

Similar but more permanent effects come from using satin stitch over any number of threads. The working thread is first run in where it will be covered and held by the first few stitches (Fig 1).

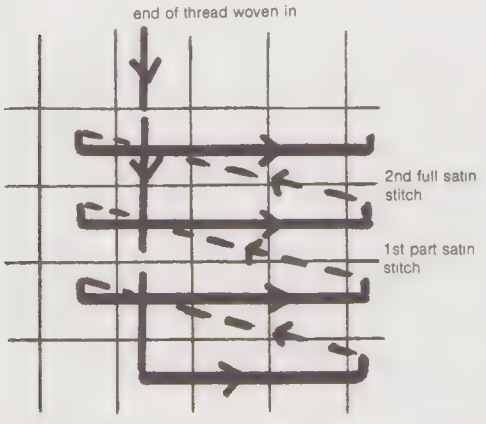


Fig. 1. Showing the beginning of a satin stitch row.

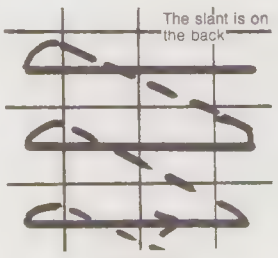


Fig. 2a

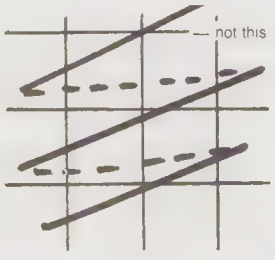
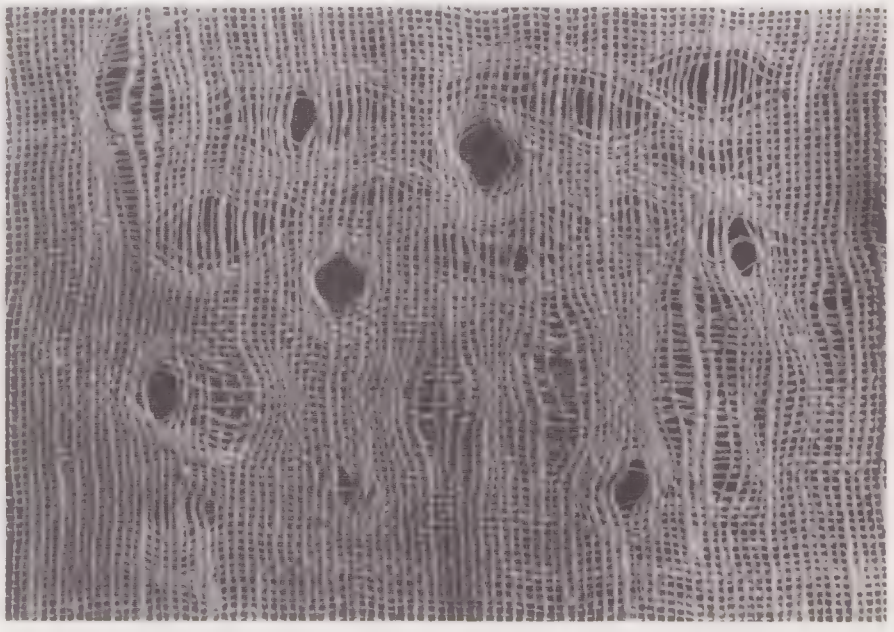


Fig. 2b

The satin stitch is worked from the bottom upwards over any number of threads. It will depend on the material used how many threads can be pulled together without bunching. (In the second photograph eight or nine could be included because a very fine scrim was used (11 threads per cm.) but five would be a maximum for most materials). Each row should be pulled firmly and the front of the stitch kept on the same level and not slanted into the next row. (Figs 2a and 2b).

These satin stitches can be repeated as many times as required and can be made to 'wander' so that the vertical row moves over 2 or 3 threads to either left or right. (In the first instance the width should be kept the same but experiments in reducing or increasing it can be made next). After a few more satin stitches the movement to left or right can be repeated — then after

Photograph 1 — Note slubby nature of linen used — (5-6 threads per cm)



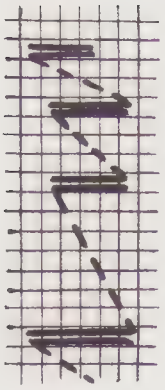


Fig 5: Bunching of stitches.

a further interval the line can be brought back in the opposite direction. (Fig 3). To finish, the thread is taken to the back and run down through the worked column of stitches.

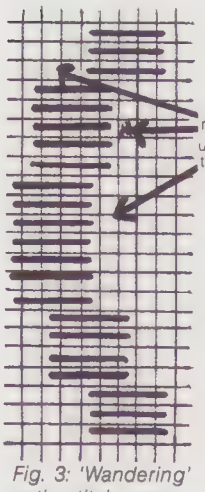


Fig. 3: 'Wandering' satin stitch over 4 threads.

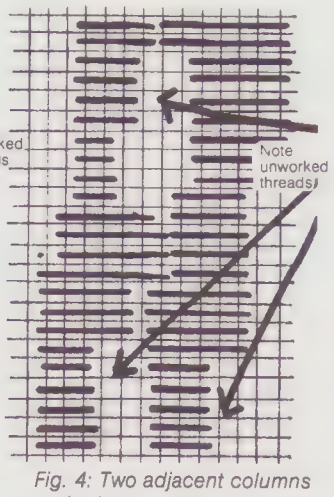


Fig. 4: Two adjacent columns worked over varying numbers of threads

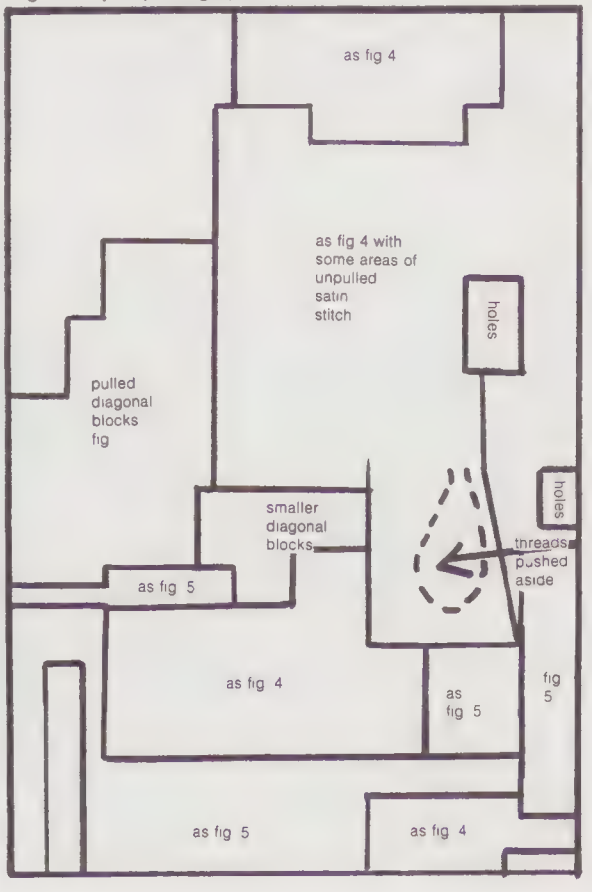
Another row can be started adjacent to the first at the bottom — using different numbers of threads and varying the sizes of the satin stitch blocks. It will be seen that contrasting areas are being formed — open airy parts opposed to denser regions formed by the threads pulled together with additional weight given by the working threads in the stitches, with unworked threads wandering from one group to another (Fig 4). New shapes are continually being formed. Another contrast can be obtained by allowing some of the satin stitches to lie comfortably on the surface without being pulled (*as in Key — Fig. 6).

There are very few rules to worry about — the work can be done in any direction and shapes produced as wanted. If the effect is not pleasing then the stitches can be undone and the background threads pushed back into position and a new idea tried out. It is important not to allow any loose ugly threads to be visible on the front or behind any 'holey' areas. This can happen when moving from one area to another. If necessary, an extra tug should be given, or the thread taken behind, caught into a previously worked stitch or finished off so that a new area can be begun independently and neatly. Also variety can be introduced with change in thickness of thread — e.g. border to pearl to two or three stands of stranded cotton and back again. On the whole, beginners do not pull tightly enough and do not 'wander' freely enough so that the result looks very columnar instead of being light, airy and interesting.

Another easy way to achieve more of this effect is to work two back stitches tightly over several threads, then to take the thread up behind for some distance and repeat the two back stitches as in Fig 5. Again no counting is required, there is no need to take up the

Photograph 2 Sampler worked on fine linen scrim, 11 threads per cm.

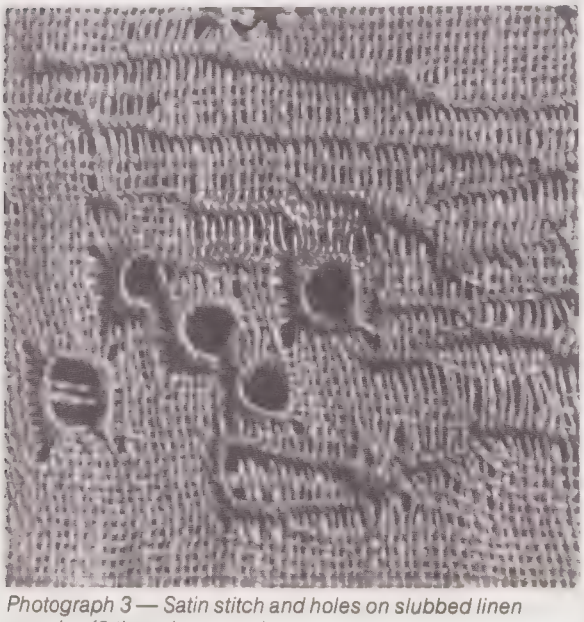
Fig. 6. Key to photograph 2.



same number of threads each time so that once more there will be unworked threads. (Figs 5 & 6 and Photograph 2).

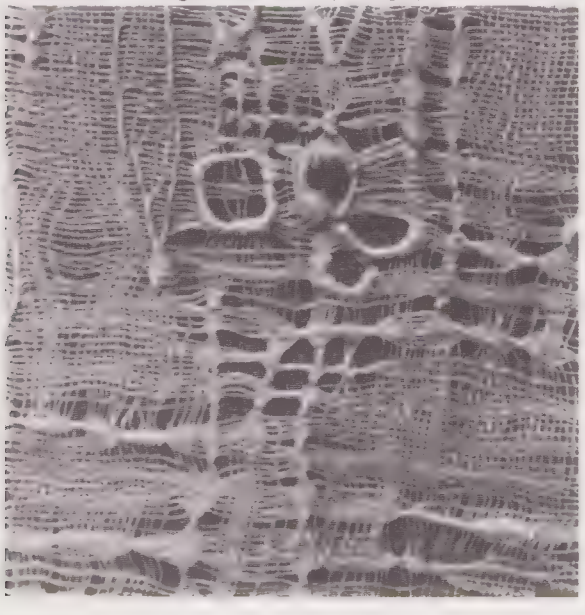
Different materials can be experimented with — rows can be worked at right angles and so on — there is plenty of scope.

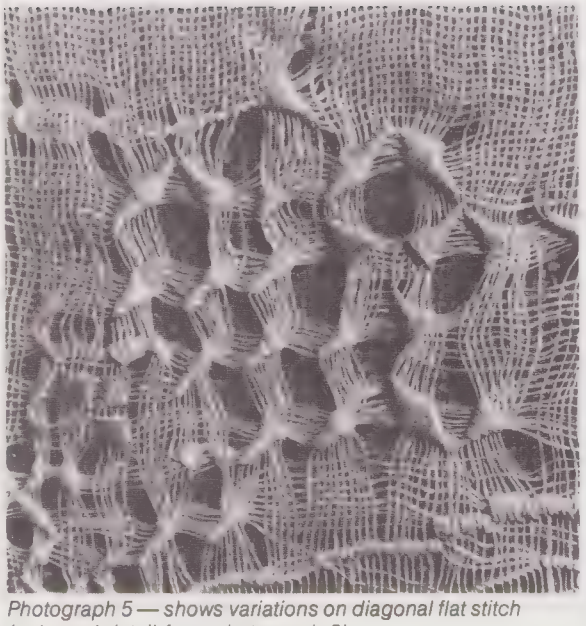
To get larger holes eyelets can be worked to give the effects seen in the centre and top left of photograph 3. The method is basically the same as in canvas work but whereas the aim there is to keep the outer edge from pulling out of shape and exposing the canvas threads — here this can be used to advantage with new shapes being formed. Also the holes may have unequal sides, may be only partly worked or can have



Photograph 3 — Satin stitch and holes on slubbed linen sampler (6 threads per cm).

Photograph 4: Another area of scrim sampler showing variations including holes — from photograph 2 enlarged.





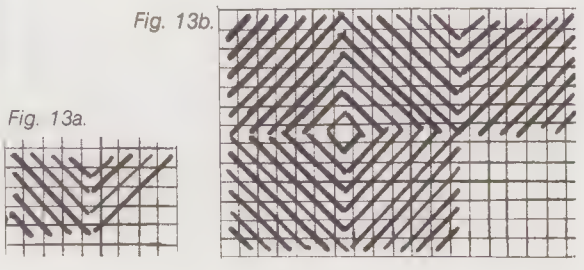
Photograph 5 — shows variations on diagonal flat stitch (enlarged detail from photograph 2).

threads crossing them. All these ideas can be seen in photographs 3 and 4, Figs 7, 8, 9a & 9b, 10. Diamond shaped holes (even and uneven) can also be tried.

In photograph 5 very interestingly shaped holes have been formed by variations on diagonal flat stitch (Figs 13a and 13b).

Fig. 13b.

Fig. 13a.



Diagonal flat stitch is worked the same way as in canvas work but each is pulled tightly as it is done. This distorts the background considerably so that when learning the stitch it may be easier to do the whole block with the thread lying on the surface and then pulling them tightly beginning with No. 1 (Fig 13a), followed by working the next blocks as shown in fig 13b. In Fig 12, variations in shapes of spaces and threads have arisen because full blocks have been worked in some cases (1) but only half blocks elsewhere (2). This is an excellent stitch to play around with. In the photograph (5) an area at the bottom right used the same stitch but over a smaller number of threads — in this case only 4 or 5. This was not as effective on the fine scrim as when worked over 10. This was only discovered by trial and error, and so continual experimenting is a 'must' — with working threads, background materials, number of threads included in any stitch, direction, degree of pulling and so on. Even larger holes can be introduced — by oversewing (hand or machine), buttonholing etc., and

Fig 7 — method of working eyelet holes. The needle should always go down into the hole and a pull given when it comes up again at the edge.

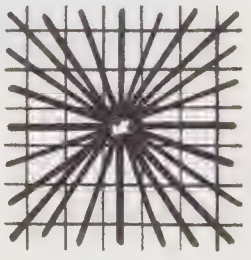


Fig. 8. Regular eyelet hole — care is needed with the last stitch — make sure that it lies smoothly next to the first. Take the thread to the back and finish off into the reverse of the stitches with a small knot if necessary to achieve this.

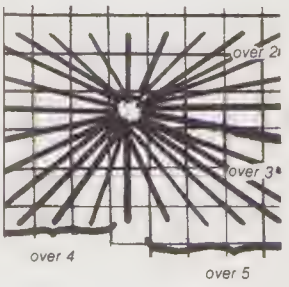
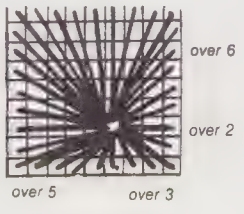


Fig. 9a and 9b — methods of obtaining uneven holes.



Photograph 6 — "Axle Box" on orange dacron curtaining (approx. 4 threads per cm).

Fig. 14a. Several rows of machine running or other means of finishing edge centre cut away.

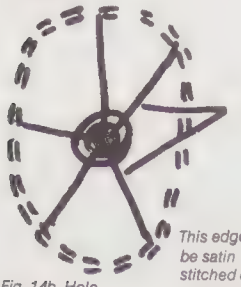
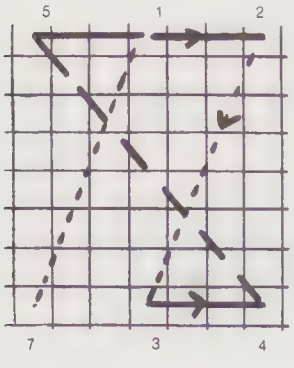


Fig. 14b. Hole subdivided with 'spider's web' centre (hand or machine).

This edge can be satin stitched on the machine later or hand embroidered.



then cutting out the centre. These larger holes can then be subdivided — again by hand or by free machining without the foot and the feed dropped as for darning. (Fig 14a and 14b).

This free type of pulled work can be combined with other techniques, such as quilting which helps to enhance the contrasts between heavy to dense areas formed by the quilting with the light open holes and the medium background. Photograph 6 shows a panel in which these ideas were used. It was developed from a transparency of a railway wagon axle box photographed in a steam train 'cemetery' in Wales. The leaf spring was 'quilted' over wire using double backstitch or reverse closed herringbone (Fig 15) and the other areas over nylon wadding by the padded method. The rest was worked in various pulled stitches as shown in the following photographs.

Cushion stitch is another pulled work stitch — based on double back stitch — usually worked in rows. Here each block was finished off and the next one worked diagonally above. There are very many more stitches which can be found in 'Pulled Thread' by Moyra McNeill (Mills and Boon). These stitches should only be considered as a starting point for further experimenting. Remember in all embroidery that you are in charge of your stitch — not it in charge of you.

Cynthia Sparks

Cynthia Sparks is an embroiderer whose work has been exhibited in many major art galleries in England and Australia.

Fig 15. Double backstitch (reverse closed herring bone) — can be used to imitate corded quilting if worked over string, thick wool, wire etc. or can be pulled to give various stitches like cushion, used here.

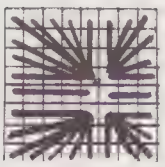


Fig. 11 — method of combining satin stitch with holes.

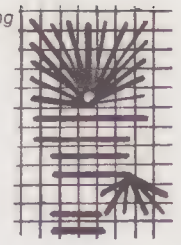


Fig. 10 — method of working uneven hole with threads across the centre.

Photograph 7 (Detail of 6).

Photograph 8 (Detail of 6). Cushion stitch is another pulled work stitch — based on double back stitch — usually worked in rows. Here each block was finished off and the next one worked diagonally above. There are very many more stitches which can be found in 'Pulled Thread' by Moyra.

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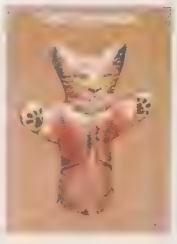

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Isolation Asset or Liability?

Jenny Ransom Overgown.

Ever since the founding of the Swan River Colony 150 years ago, Western Australians have been burdened with a sense of inferiority. They have referred to themselves as "The Cinderella State"; they have felt themselves to be under-privileged, looked down upon by people of other States, neglected by the Federal Government, and generally considered to be second class citizens. They have even tried to secede from the Commonwealth! Not that all this sense of isolation stems from the physical presence of a great desert dividing them from their fellows. Even at the beginning, the colony was not a part of the original settlement based on Botany Bay, but was governed directly from England as a separate entity. A guidebook for emigrants, published in 1848, advised intending voyagers to Australia not to consider "choosing the Colony as their last resting place!"

Gradually over the years this sense of hurt has been erased from the Western Australian psyche, and the process has been considerably quickened by the fact that with the discovery and exploitation of its vast mineral wealth, the State has become the country's largest exporter of primary materials; in fact its greatest money earner. Moreover, it has found itself to be a leader in many fields that Australians prize, particularly in sport. Its cricket teams have won interstate competitions with monotonous regularity, despite the fact that its cricket ground, considered elsewhere to be one of the best in the world, was not thought by Australian cricket authorities to be worthwhile for a Test Match until 1970.

It produces trotting horses, hockey players, golfers, and swimmers of international repute, and yet it must be said that for a long time — in fact until quite recently — in most things, mediocrity reigned supreme. Soon after World War II, for instance, it was claimed that a third of the top grade public servants in Canberra, the nation's capital, came from either Western Australia or Tasmania, a State with similar problems of isolation. To succeed, it would seem, one had to leave the State and go where ability was an asset and not a threat to someone else.

In the arts the isolation was almost complete. It is an interesting commentary that just before the war the Perth Repertory Club was the largest and best organised amateur dramatic group in the whole of what was then called the British Empire! Plainly this was because the State was something of a cultural desert, and those who had need of more than a visit from a second rate touring company or a third rate variety performance in the local music hall were forced to produce it for themselves. For several years the State's annual Drama Festival was a model for other States and many of its then amateur actors now grace the stages of theatres all over the world.

Other fields of art were not so fruitful. The State has probably produced only one writer of true international repute; Katherine Susannah Pritchard, and only a few nationally known artists. One can think of Robert Juniper, Guy Grey-Smith, Diana Johnson and William Boissevain. There must be more but these are the only names that spring to the mind. Hal Missingham achieved recognition by going to Sydney!

But these people *have* achieved recognition, and it is worth speculating upon the total impact isolation has had over the years on the development of arts and crafts in the State. Undoubtedly there still exists a total lack of recognition of Western Australian work in some quarters of the Commonwealth. Recently for instance, Bernard Sahm, who had been given the task of selecting a representative exhibition of Australian crafts on behalf of the Crafts Board of the Australia Council, neglected to choose any Western Australian work on the grounds that "Western Australian craftsmen had not had anything to fight with; to compare with"; the obvious inference being that he considered that Western Australia has nothing worth showing. Mr Sahm talked about "the logistics of isolation" but seems really to have been saying that he couldn't be bothered to cross the Nullabor to see for himself.

Crafts people in Western Australia have several theories on the subject of isolation. Joan Campbell, for instance, present *doyenne* of Western Australian potters, whose work is know all over the world, feels that in many ways the isolation has worked *for* her rather than against her. She believes that to be unique she must work where she draws her inspiration, and that means she must work in Western Australia. This is probably one of the reasons for her success. Her use of local minerals in making glazes has attracted wide attention. The Japanese were so interested that they invited her to demonstrate her techniques in Japan. She believes in doing what she feels best, rather than pander to public demand, and she really believes that her pots represent Western Australia.

Eric Car the silversmith says modestly that he is glad that he did not have to compete in more important places. If Perth hadn't been so small, he says, he might not have been able to establish himself. "To be recognised in places like London or Amsterdam, you have to be good and I might not have been good enough." (He did in fact work in Amsterdam, where he met Rinske his wife, one of the leading weavers in Western Australia). Now that Eric Car is established and in fact known nationally and internationally, the lack of population in the west brings its disadvantages. To survive he must carry on with what he calls "bread and butter" lines.

And as the population is so limited, and not particularly sophisticated in its tastes, this presents difficulties.

The worst problem of isolation is not so much the isolation of the craftsman from places where his work can be seen. because although transportation is undoubtedly difficult and costly, there is nothing to prevent him from sending slides of his work to the Resource Centre of the Crafts Council of Australia which has a slide library of works of Australian craftsmen. This will ensure that other people know about him. But until he is really nationally recognised, and even after that, his market remains in the State, where the demand for new or avant garde work is limited.

But there is one other aspect of the problem that probably affects most creative people, no matter what field they work in. And that is the lack of the stimulus of seeing other peoples' work. Geoff Allen, a jeweller, makes the point firmly. "This is what I miss," he says. "Every artist needs to see what his fellows are doing." Plainly he is right. The give and take — not of competition, but of artistic thought — is the lifeblood of artistic expression, and with out it, the artist is considerably handicapped. And until there is more flow of ideas across this vast continent, progress in the largest State (which still has almost the smallest population) will be impeded indeed.

George Mulgrue

George Mulgrue, arts writer and critic from Western Australia.

Lynn Elzinga-Henry Hand painted panel.

Greg Crowe

Greg Crowe.

One young West Australian who feels there is strength in isolation is Greg Crowe who originally came from England to settle in Albany in South West of the State. An architecture graduate who spent 18 months as a cadet for the State Government and then returned to W.A.I.T. to study ceramics, Greg is aware of the landscape around him, of the "textured clay of the sunburnt country," but does not feel it is for him to reproduce. "I like salt glaze. I like my pots as glossy as possible. I seem to have started at the other end of the potter's dream. I am aware of the size of Australia and I think that is having an effect on my work. I admire people like the American Don Reitz. I like the way he can throw 50 pounds of clay. I'd really like to learn how to do that."

Greg was spurred on by the Potter's Conference in Sydney in May 1958, to build his own kiln on a property 40 miles out of Perth in the hills. This means that he has to move his green pots very cautiously from his studio to his kiln, but the results have been most successful. Regarded as one of the brightest young potters in the West, Greg has had to adjust from the rather secure situation at W.A.I.T. "where all the kilns work in the way you expect from long usage" to the experimental world of earning his own living from his own resources. "There are a lot of alternatives," he said. "I could go and work with other potters, but it is very good to be out on my own."

Salt glazed pots.

Lynn Elzinga-Henry

Hand painting on silk.

A young artist who has turned her hand to one of the oldest crafts in the world is talented Lynn Elzinga-Henry who paints on silk.

Originally trained in woodblock printing in Holland and Japan and very interested in textiles generally, Lynn's real breakthrough came when she accompanied her husband to Japan for a year and took the opportunity to learn the ancient art of painting on silk.

"I worked in a kimono painting factory in Kyoto. I think the Japanese were very surprised that I wanted to learn about painting on silk but they agreed to my request. Of course I had to paint in a traditional manner directly on to the silk and I could not do anything original. The traditional patterns are very beautiful but very clearly defined and there is no way that any changes could be permitted. After the painting the silk is steamed to set the pattern. "When I returned to Australia I was able to put my own ideas into the work. I find it fascinating and so far have not had difficulty in selling my work. I try to keep it within a normal price range — for instance although I could hand sew rolled edges on the scarves I don't because this would make the price prohibitive." Because of the sophistication of her designs Lynn Elzinga-Henry could work anywhere in the world but she enjoys the freedom of Western Australia. Her marketing techniques could be followed by many craftsmen. A well designed hand made paper tag is attached to her products giving washing instructions and subtly advertising the craftsman's name.

Lynn Elzinga-Henry.

Andrew Frost

Andrew Frost.

A young jeweller with a difference is Andrew Frost. He regards his work as public sculpture and would as happily make huge pieces as ornaments to adorn the body.

Andrew regards himself as part of Western Australia. "It's where I live. It's a part of me and I am a part of the West. I think it is an amazing place."

To "stay sane" Andrew intends to buy a farm and to make what he wants to make. "The farm will support me and allow me to make what I want without compromises. Everything I make has part of me in it and I want to make all kinds of things — egg slices, deck chairs, jewellery, sculpture."

Farming is not new to Frost who has grown up on a property. His father gave up accountancy to escape the city. His mother is a potter and a horse breeder. "She raises Welsh mountain ponies breeding them for temperament and beauty. They are children's ponies, the most beautiful animals. I can honestly say that I have always been surrounded by lovely things. I don't mean material things. Our childhood on the farm was amazing. There were five boys and we were never given toys or any of that sort of thing. We didn't need them. We had the bush and the farm. We went fishing and shooting and generally had the greatest fun. It's such an honest life on a farm. The day makes its own work, and the work starts when the day begins."

Andrew Frost is not afraid of hard work. Between school where he was most interested in physics and agricultural science and university he had a year off working on the wharves and the roads. "Labouring work, boring jobs. But not as boring as Agricultural Science turned out to be. I found such a huge gap between theory and practice that I left after six months. I had always made things and I began experimenting with silver. At home I buffed up some really old tarnished silver with a polishing machine and the result was magic. I decided to study at W.A.I.T."

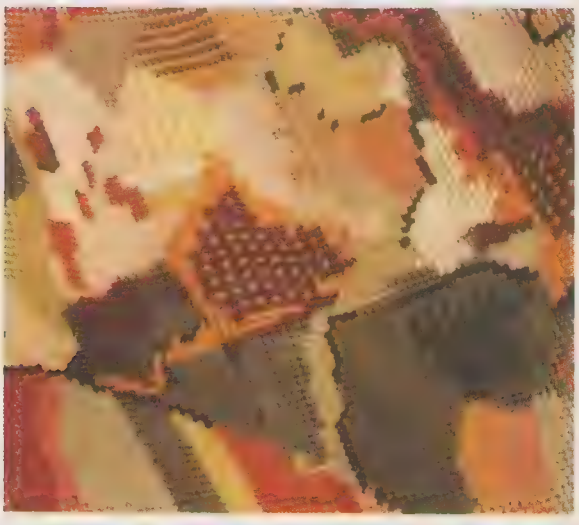
Brooch silver and wood.

Possibly not the quietest student that W.A.I.T. has known Andrew's understanding of physics and his natural practical ability stood him in good stead with the craft course. However with less than a year to go before graduating he went off on a tour of his own. Despite his bewilderment in big cities he found Frank Bauer in Adelaide's Jam Factory, went on to visit Rex Keogh in Melbourne ("I learnt more about jewellery in one night than in the previous two and a half years") called in on Ray Norman at Sturt and to everyone's surprise returned to W.A.I.T. and completed his course.

Bracelet II brass.

Bracelet I brass

Jenny Ransom



Jenny Ransom is another university graduate who has turned to crafts after having tried a completely different profession. Once a secondary teacher with a degree in Arts Literature from the University of Western Australia, Jenny is now a second year craft student at W.A.I.T. majoring in textiles.

"I have a background of people using textiles. My grandmother was an incredibly creative woman who loved old laces and sewed most brilliantly. She made all sorts of incredibly lovely things and I grew up knowing that it was quite possible to use textiles as well."

Jenny attended the Gathering of Young Craftsmen in Adelaide in 1978 and was very impressed with David Green who was giving a workshop there. David who is in charge of textile design at R.M.I.T. challenged Jenny's imagination.

"I always like to draw. I like to build a garment from the drawing board. I found David Green's attitude challenging but at the same time practical and that appeals to me."

Jenny was equally influenced by David Watkins and Wendy Ramshaw when they were at W.A.I.T. and attended their summer school as part of her course.

A little older than some of her contemporaries because of the previous work she has done, Jenny Ransom has had the opportunity to travel. "I loved London but I really missed the space and the light of Western Australia. I am greatly influenced by the landscape. I've always been used to camping out in the desert and the bush. Even though sometimes I don't like it, that isolation is part of me now. The beach is terribly important, and the wonderful washed out colours of the west, and that sky going on forever."

Jenny Ransom

Machine embroidery. Small wall panel.

Needlepoint

Silkscreen floor cushions.

3D embroidery. Hand dyed silk.

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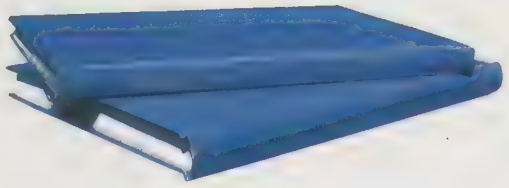

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Critical Eye

What is an Australian Pot?
Upon reading The Japanese Influence on Australian Pottery — Arthur McIntyre C.A. 1978/3

Articles about the influence of Japanese ceramics, of Bernard Leach, and of Shoji Hamada appear with dependable regularity in the craft magazines of the English-speaking countries. In recent years, such articles tend to lament, strongly or gently, the pervasiveness of this influence, and end with a breathy wish for Something Else or Not That. Strangely, all such articles evade, ignore, or bypass some vital ideas — ideas expressed clearly both in words and example by Leach and Hamada.

Before ranting on about such oversights and the surrounding phenomena, the lumping together of the influences of Leach, Hamada, and Japan should be examined. That Japanese pottery is emulated anywhere and everywhere potters work is only natural. Technically, Japan is unsurpassed. The vigor of the country's potters (spurred, indeed, by remarkable public interest in pots) is wildly contagious. That so many techniques are so very alive in Japan gives the country's pottery craft great power. Aesthetically, Japan presents the world with a monolithic intellectual model, marvellously self-contained which can be glib (e.g., the usual tea ceremony and ikebana pots) or be humble and profoundly enlightened. The aesthetic precepts coming out of Japan are appealing, adaptable, and also overwhelming in their strength. Leach's articulate writings and pots, his East-West message, and the rigorous aesthetic standard he has maintained — all meeting felicitously with the flow of historical process — have made and will make his influence the same kind of event as a wind. Hamada is Hamada and a law unto himself. He is probably the least understood of modern potters despite the attention and reverence given him. These three forces are certainly not the same, but the fact that they are seen as similar is a reality. That the individual content of each influence is not more clearly recognized or felt relates to the basic problem of how potters nourish themselves.

A rapid look through any ceramic survey of America, Australia, or England gives the impression that pots are divided broadly into two types — the Leach-Japan-brown-and-black functional persuasion and the glob-thrown-from-the-third-storey-and-fired-as-it-splats nonfunctional school. There are plenty of in-betweens, but these are the poles, which are too often considered to be the only alternatives — a pot is functional or it's a sculpture.

A disappointingly large amount of the work of the Japan-Leach persuasion looks like borrowed clothes; the splat school may produce things that are simply silly, or, unforgivably, things that altogether reject the qualities and beauty of clay and glaze. Mechanical emulation of another aesthetic tradition, particularly a strong one, stifles; the effort of rejecting convention and the resulting agony of search produce objects that state nothing more than rejection of convention and the agony of search. What, then, are sustaining paths for craftspeople of countries whose handwork and craft traditions are largely dead?

Hamada had the great advantage of being born Japanese. He had the freedom to accept any of the many pottery traditions in Japan, yet he rejected them all. Rejected is not right — rather, he accepted them all and went his own way. Hamada chose Mashiko to work and live in because it was empty. The kilns there were only about seventy years old when he arrived, and the ware was kitchen crockery quickly going out of use. This choice he recounts in an untranslated little article, in which he says that in a stronger, older pottery tradition (he was considering Ryūmonji), he would spend his entire life trying to match himself against the tradition itself. Hamada was thoroughly Japanese, yet there was no more eclectic potter anywhere. In fact, he rejected nothing. Using the focus of his own Japanese-ness, which he embraced fully and comfortably, he nourished himself from the pots and from all objects of every country and age. And that is the subject of this article — nourishment.

Reaction against or rejection of the Japan persuasion is as fettering as trying to be Japanese (or anything else) when one is not. Generally, a Westerner, is able to pose in but cannot successfully walk in a Japanese kimono. He or she simply moves differently (Japanese youth today have this same problem.) With intense practice of the right kind, however, a certain amount of expertise can be attained, but the problem remains of how much this skill is just acquired facility and how much comes from within. Leach is largely responsible for bringing the Japanese aesthetic to the Western craft world. This contribution was and is revolutionary and was not and is not well digested. Nowhere, in word or deed, does Leach prevail upon the potter to make the same kinds of pots that the Japanese make. Nor does he tout reduction-fired stoneware with rich iron glazes as being the only kind of pots worth making.

No one can walk on air. It is a constant source of surprise but not delight that so many people ignore their terrestial attachment, especially in the craft and design worlds. The impossible coffee cup (and pitcher) handles done by Japanese potters are certainly the result of naivete and lack of tradition, but lack of common sense also contributes. Granted that there is no handle tradition to speak of in Japan, yet it takes only one second to pick up a cup and find that biceps, triceps, and half the major back muscles are being used to heft the clunky thing to realize its degree of success. The cheap cups sold in all the local stores in Japan have better handles than the expensive work of the art and mingei potters. Ignorance of the feel of a good handle is a thin excuse. Though there is little technical knowledge of handle-making, this information is available. What seems to short out such potters' efforts is the preoccupation with style — simply that. (True horrors are the Bizen-style coffee cups. The same aesthetic delight and practical effect can be obtained by pasting thick brown sandpaper on the rim of a bone china cup. At least the latter will be balanced.) A good example of walking on air. Another one is the "modern" stainless steel flatware. Designers galloping fervently after innovation and style have completely ignored the fact that knives, forks, and spoons are to be used and that over a couple of centuries people have refined the design for use. Peas and rice provide an impossible task for the three slender tines of the early nineteenth century English fork (eating habits and manners were different), but the light balance was already perfected. Such a fork is a pleasure to hold. Some of the most excellent, balanced tableware ever made is the cheap, turn-of-the-century Sheffield plate. The ground is there to tread. Why is it ignored?

Every human born has ground to walk on — his own ground, which must be explored before the topography of other places can be appreciated. Hamada's showing of objects in his collection to all visitors was a careful, exact, and conscious (not calculated, but *conscious*) effort to give nourishment and provide an example. In fact, his entire life-style was precisely structured. The countryside in which he chose to live, the Japanese house he chose to live in, the traditional houses he erected on his land, the objects he collected from everywhere and everyone — all these nourished him constantly and all can be seen in his pots. (His use of only six glazes for a half-century and his commitment to repetition work are his own choices and are not part of this article).

Leach's focus and use of energy are different. In his writings and, more quietly, in his pots, he opened up the richness of English medieval pots, of slipware, of German salt-glazed

stoneware, the richness of Japan, of Sung dynasty China, of Korea. Neither Leach nor Hamada ever said follow this or do that. They are not band leaders. Their message, if there is one, is first to draw attention to the ground where each craftsman and artist stands and then to point to the ground where we all walk.

Leach, Japan, Hamada are resources. No more. So are Staffordshire pots, Pueblo Indian polychrome, Gothic cathedrals, Andean textiles, Spanish furniture, seashells, Korean objects of paper and stone, French ironwork, etc. and so forth.

The bewilderment and search by the craftspeople of a young country must be respected, as must the pain and courage involved in their exploration of creative sources and expressions. Where there is little or no living craft tradition, imitation may be an important and early part of the learning process as an effort to bounce oneself off prototypic examples or wares. But there is no reason why copper underglaze must be associated with plum blossoms or tigers, or, conversely, why a soft celadon cannot be used for beer mugs. No matter how skilful or facile, a Leach-style or Japanese-style pot made by an Australian is not a Leach pot or a Japanese pot or an Australian pot. (Q. What is an Australian pot? A. Dunno. What's an American pot? This is worth arguing?) The wearing of borrowed trappings can only become tedious and enervating. At the same time there is danger (falseness?) in lamentation or cries for release from stylistic domination; the people who cry the loudest often are waiting for the next fashion from outside to supplant the old one.

What this oversimplified and pulpit-thumping article is trying to say is that the ideas and examples of the old boys — Leach and Hamada — and of Japanese pottery should not be disregarded but should be *freshly* seen again — and again. The next point is that the craftsman has his primary source of life under his own feet. When he embraces his own, then the collective experience of the world becomes accessible. For young countries like the U.S., Canada, and Australia, in which "craftsman" means "artist-craftsman", the widest range of eclectic influences arising from the various immigrant groups as well as eclectic influences from abroad provide the raw material for healthy artistic synthesis and creativity. It is up to the craftsman to nourish and constantly renew himself.

Kim Schoefftan

Kim Schoefftan is Senior Editor with Japanese Art Publishers Kodansha International Ltd, specialising in traditional crafts.

Sexism in the crafts

I was prompted to write on sexism in the crafts by an article which appeared in the National Times way back in June (2nd) 1978.

What struck me most forcibly was the sexism of the Auststralian potters interviewed whom I judged to be accurately reported. The following quotations speak for themselves.

"Australia's elite craftsmen — its leading potters — are a worried group of men".

"(they) see hobbyists getting the grants; they blazed the trail for craftsmen, but now think women run the show".

"*Dedicated amateurs* at home everyone suspects of not being serious, because they are *supported by their husbands*" (my italics).

Sexism is almost a taboo subject in the polite apolitical world of craft. To remain apolitical on such an important issue as this is to support the status quo and the status quo is:

(1) Though female students at art schools number over 50 per cent of the student body, the average female staff at art schools is only 10 per cent. This imbalance disadvantages female students in that

(a) they have no role models: If a female student sees that while female art teachers are fairly common in secondary schools but rare at tertiary institutions she is more likely to set her sights lower, at what appears to be a more attainable goal.

(b) they have male teachers with little or no understanding of the female student who wishes to develop feminist, or even just female, themes, with the result that: "the content of work often becomes disguised in a formal aesthetic acceptable to the scrutiny of men" — Bonita Ely writing on Sexism in Art Education in the Women's Show Adelaide '77 documentation.

(c) they are disadvantaged when jobs become available in art schools with only a one in 10 chance of getting them against males.

(2) Lack of recognition at an educational level of the possibilities of traditional female craft skills in areas like sculpture — most, if not all, sculpture departments are staffed by men who in the main (and understandably because that is what they know) teach the traditional male techniques in hard materials, metal, wood, etc.

(3) There is a sex typing in occupations. Females do well in the fibre area which are traditionally female but in all the other areas, clay, wood, metal, glass, leather, women are decidedly in the minority if one is thinking only of the professional craft workers and leaving out all the amateurs. An expansion and variation of training for women is economically imperative as anyone can see upon comparing the unemployment figures of men and women.

(4) On account of the conditions above females have less chance of being successful applicants to the Crafts Board for assistance. Successful individual applications by women total about 30.5 per cent of the total money available for individual grants.

From the quotations I report a sexism is clearly evident amongst Australian potters and from the lack of action from State Craft Councils to remedy the above I claim the craft world as represented by them is sexist by default.

A sizeable sum of money did go indirectly to women craft workers through the Rug Event and will do so through the In-Gear program. The Craft Councils, following complaints from professional members that the Rug Event was an amateur program that took valuable time and money away from programs that would benefit professionals, were reluctant to help with the In-Gear project despite the fact that professional fibrists (mostly women) benefit to some extent from these community projects. On the one hand a reluctance to help amateur women crafts people, on the other no action to help women overcome the disadvantages that face them in order to become professionals.

There is an erroneous belief in Australia that most craft activity is pottery; that "of all the art forms it has the greatest leisure time appeal" (I quote from the National Times article). This is false. The most practised crafts in Australia are the fibre crafts. There is hardly a woman in Australia who wasn't taught to knit and sew and crochet at her mother's knee. One doesn't necessarily find them belonging to the local craft groups and they are not necessarily (perhaps even rarely) designer makers, but if one is including all the amateurs in both ceramics and fibre then the fibre crafts are more widely practised than ceramics. If one is only counting professionals however, then the ratio is immediately reversed to about 3 potters to 1 fibrist reflecting the underdevelopment of professionalism among women in Australia and also reflecting the educational imbalance between the two fields — the fibre crafts tend more to be taught at an enrichment level.

In my personal experience there are two common reactions from men and women crafters to *active* feminism. Many women in the craft world claim to be feminists and frequently give one the impression that it's a little bit old hat to them and wouldn't it be more interesting to talk about something else — "women can make it if they want to — I did". This I'm-alright-Jill philosophy I

find just as morally reprehensible as the millionaire arguing that she/he shouldn't have to pay taxes. A common male attitude is, apart from the rather crude "what do you want to have balls for?", "you've got the vote and equal pay, what else do you need chick?", and a general apprehension about what women are going to take away from him, is that, like menstruation, it's a woman's problem and nothing to do with men. It's hard to find a male who has read one book on feminism. My contention is that equality of the sexes like equality of the races and an absence of a class structure of any kind is a better and more civilised way of living therefore success of the feminist cause will better the world for both men and women. The more people that join in the struggle the quicker our goal will be reached.

I would like to conclude on a question of language. In Craft Australia, in all the State Craft Council Newsletters and all Crafts Council of Australia correspondence the word craftsman is used to denote both men and women. When one complains one is accused of being trivial or of trying to thrust the ugly word crafts person on people who find it too ugly to put their tongue round! Or one is told that the word craftsman is being used generically. Vivienne Binns has ably argued that language is a way of maintaining the status quo, I quote:

"Some of the conditioned attitudes of women towards themselves and their capabilities are reinforced by language. They do not feel/think they are capable of this or that because everything associated with it may be masculine. It may be a position generally occupied by a man, it may constantly be referred to in the masculine gender. Hence the need for role models and for realistic terminology that people can relate to themselves".

And another reason for making people change. If they have to consciously think of saying crafts person (crafter, crafter worker, take your pick, designer maker even), then their consciousness is being changed just as it is when people are persuaded to say black rather than nigger. The oppressed are dictating a small change to the oppressor which can have wider repercussions. Also if one corrects people when they say craftsman rather than crafts person one is bringing to the attention of the speaker who is rigidly holding to what she/he thinks is a non-political word, that there is still a battle to be fought for women, that the battle is very far from being won and without constant vigilance and political action the position of women could actually regress. There could get to be fewer jobs available as unemployment and pressure for women to get out of the work force increases.

Another seemingly common belief is that the women's movement is the affair of Women's Liberation or Women's Electoral Lobby or the Women's Art Movement or perhaps just women. And there is also I think a belief that State Craft Councils have men members as well as women so can't get mixed up in promoting a political idea that only concerns half the membership. The gaining of quality of opportunity for women is everybody's responsibility in whatever sphere they move.

Pru (Medlin) La Motte

Decade down under — Tim Moorhead

Clive Parry Galleries 1st March-5th April (1978)

Tim Moorhead's exhibition marked two significant events in his ceramic art development. As indicated by the exhibition's title it celebrated the tenth anniversary of his life as a potter in Australia. It also displayed the work produced during a Fellowship at the Australian National University — the first ceramic artist to be awarded such a fellowship from the University.

Much of the exhibition comprised the use of on-glaze ceramic transfers, a technique known as decalomania. This process of applying on-glaze enamels to a glazed surface is widely used in the commercial pottery industry as surface decoration, but rarely by individual studio potters. Moorhead's handmade decals were mainly of Australian parrots, ornithologically descriptive, fused to the plain glazed surfaces of traditional shapes of white stoneware such as bowls, plates and vase forms.

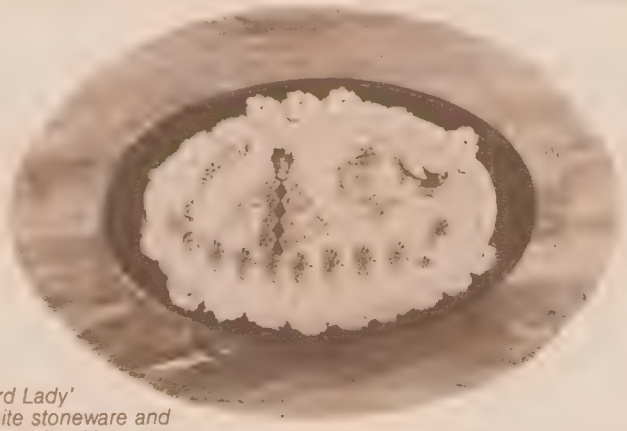
Many of the shapes and decorative qualities were reminiscent of the simpler Victorian whitewares, tempting the viewer to assess the aesthetics of the pots from a position of conventional taste. While some pots were softly and sympathetically decorated by the bird images, the remainder were embellished with brightly and harshly coloured parrot transfers which sat uncomfortably on the glaze surface. To respond only to the decorative qualities of these images was, I believe, to limit the realm of interpretations which were evoked by the artist. From the few 'non-pot' exhibits; his exhibition title and because of his former work, it would seem to suggest that these pots should not have been seen purely as superficially decorated pieces. There was evidence, especially in the template cut-out Australian landscapes and boxed plaques that a reaction to his adopted Australian environment motivated the selection of the distinctive parrot as a thematic image. Although it would appear that this repetition of imagery was symbolic of a close identity with his new homeland one can not help imagining Moorhead giving a wry smile as he presented us with a non-too-flattering symbol of his 'ocker' experiences.

'Australian Parrots'
White stoneware with onglaze decal decoration.

The small wall plaques, template landscape (like amateur theatrical sets) and lidded boxed objects did not promote the dilemma of response which I found in viewing the conventionally shaped, 'decorated' pots. These non-functional works were more akin to his earlier pieces which have largely been influenced by the directions of West Coast American ceramicists.

While many viewers found in Moorhead's latest works an affirmation of viewpoint long established, others found the marriage of familiar forms with unconventional illustrative symbolism difficult to comprehend and appreciate. There seemed to be very little 'fence sitting' in response. Such positive reaction would indicate, at the very least, that such a showing had an impact on the pottery viewing public of Melbourne.

Alan Watt



'Bird Lady'
White stoneware and porcelain with onglaze decal decoration.

Photography: David Fetherston

Tapestry and the Australian Painter:
Two years of work by the Victorian Tapestry Workshop.
National Gallery of Victoria
Oct-Nov 1978.

During Oct-Nov. 1978 the Melbourne public was privileged to witness the results of the first two years of work at the Victorian Tapestry Workshop. The workshop was established in 1976 and has been generously sponsored by the Victorian Government through its Ministry for the Arts. The literature published by the workshop, and for the recent exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, explains its public function to provide, on a sound businesslike basis, tapestry commissions for architectural settings. The Government backing received by the Victorian Tapestry Workshop has enabled it to claim to have pursued 'a policy of complete artistic integrity.' (1) This is a strong phrase; what it appears to mean is that the workshop, and it's Director, Sue Walker, has had freedom from commercial pressure in the generation of the initial policies, and philosophy.

The exhibition unashamedly presented the successes, and the failures, of this infant workshop, which is making gargantuan strides in its efforts to establish an art form which has no previous tradition in Australia. It was a no-nonsense exhibition. The spectator was not confronted with an harmonious 'selection' — rather he was confronted with what there is! The exhibition was comprised of the physical record of the collaboration between the weavers and fourteen of the twenty five artists with whom they have worked during the last two years. In fact the entire output of the workshop is 'on the road' — some in Teheran as the Australian exhibit in the International Arts Exhibition, 1978, and the rest installed in architectural locations by commissioning organizations. The failures have not been swept under the carpet — they are, in fact, as instructive as the successes and their inclusion in this exhibition gave the spectator the opportunity to speculate on what syles and images are more, or less, suitable for translation into the tapestry medium.

Despite some uncomfortable results the public can be sure that the five, and now twelve, weavers of the first two years have mastered many basic skills and made considerable progress in establishing a vital, new, form of Australian artistic expression. Rather than adopting the traditional method, of tapestry woven to tapestry designs which have been specifically cartooned by the designers, the workshop has taken a contemporary theoretical stance by insisting that the 'maker', or 'art-weaver,' must play an active role in the creative process. This involves them in making personal choices and enjoying chance occurrences that cannot be finitely predetermined.

This liberalization of the craft of tapestry weaving necessarily leads to a different role for the 'designer', and the whole process inevitably involves trust and co-operation between the 'artist-designer- and the 'artist-weaver.' Both must acknowledge each other's claim to occasional brilliance. Such a situation can be more explosive, tense, and anxious than the traditional tapestry weaving establishment, but it is also more suggestive of surprise and creative excellence. The safety of precision design and rendering and the comfort of the cartoon are exchanged for a situation in which creative abilities may, or may not, co-alesce happily. This tension was abundantly clear in the recent exhibition. The workshop represented there it's courageous effort to operate from an unfamiliar and untried realm — the crucial hair-line between art and non-art. It is probably the theoretical tensions and anomalies, in terms of ingrained expectations, which have initiated some of the unkind and mis-informed criticism.

The arrangement of the exhibition was unpretentious. One had the feeling that ambitions for dramatic presentation had been sacrificed in the interests of accurate documentation, and placement of exhibits for ease of comparison and maximum intake of visual detail. However the over-all effect was not very exciting. The works were displayed in one of the least sympathetic areas of the National Gallery with no height or vista, and very irregular lighting. Installation difficulties were increased by the disparate range of items. The tapestries varied dramatically in terms of colour values, tonal range, style of imagery, and size while the paintings, prints, collages and guaches varied in all these ways, and also, in quality.

But, despite these difficulties, closer inspection revealed that in this exhibition we had an exceedingly honest demonstration of the raw, and very problematical, experimentation carried out by the weavers and artists, in an area where both the arts and the crafts have traditional reputations to uphold, but also extensive re-definitions to make.

Were these problems not enough the exhibition had also to compete for attention with the superb range of Navajo Blankets from the Berlant Collection, Los Angeles on exhibition in another part of the Gallery. Those who found the theoretical implications of the exploratory work of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop too tiresome to contemplate could turn to the visual comfort of the blankets' striking gestalts, formed from stripes, squares, diamonds, and zig-zags. These blankets, find favour functionally, as basic survival items, and aesthetically, as the refined and relatively unproblematical decorative expression of 'other minds.'

They appeal to technological man as pure and desirable, unfettered by contemporary theoretical complexity and by the dictates of ingrained aesthetic prejudices. Instead their earthy fullness, and their dignity, re-awaken our utopian dream of the 'golden age' and of the 'noble savage'.

Whereas all the problematical concerns of our habit of classification attended the tapestry exhibition, they could be side stepped in the presence of the Navajo blankets. However these issues must not be avoided if our woven art is ever to receive the generous respect usually extended to tribal weaving. The tapestry exhibition, in my opinion, met these issues head-on.

Patrick McCaughey remarked, in the catalogue introduction, that tapestry falls between the fine arts and the decorative arts and that, 'in many ways, painting remains embarrassed by the decorative.' Painting may be embarrassed, critics may be embarrassed, but the painters who have been involved in the Victorian Tapestry Workshop do not seem to be! Sue Walker has continually stressed that the most important activity of the workshop is the artistic translating of the imagery from one medium to another, and that while artists are being helped to learn about tapestry through seeing their own works woven, the weavers are learning about art by working in the presence of the works and by conversing with the artists. The woven results are sometimes patently unsuccessful but the painters' comments remain encouraging. They seem to share Sue Walker's excitement when she says, 'Every new woven piece is greeted with fresh surprise.'(2)

For instance Roger Kemp said, 'Unexpected and exciting things happen when original work is being translated into another medium. What has pleased me most at the Tapestry Workshop has been the co-operation with those working on the tapestry — their experience and genuine feeling for the work and our mutual enjoyment when their interpretation emerges.'(3) Jeffrey Smart admitted to looking forward with great interest to the 'accidental and incidental' effects which he expected to emerge, and Guy Stuart was able to say of his design, 'Lattice', (1977), 'I was delighted with the way they interpreted it.' Richard Larter was so pleased with the tapestry 'Try Tapes' (1977) that he requested the destruction of his own cartoon so that the tapestry's primacy would not be challenged. This act was

ritualistically carried out. His was a dramatic and positive gesture reflecting his confidence in the capabilities of the art-weavers and in the concept of woven art.

Alun Leach-Jones stated that he is, 'completely opposed to copying paintings in wool' but that through tapestry he can exploit 'ideas and images that normally do not find expression in my (his) painting.'

So it seems that artists, once involved, do not experience difficulty with the art — craft, high art — decoration distinctions that criticism imposes. Translation and interpretation from one skill to another and from one medium to another — even one mind to another — are seen as valid artistic activities. Most artists confess to curiosity and pleasure when this transformation takes place and do not begrudge, or under or over-estimate the decorative and textural qualities or the functionalist-craft connotations of being associated with tapestry weaving. Most it seems approach the venture with hope rather than apprehension and misgivings. Not hope that they will become, like Lurcat, notable and revolutionary tapestry designers but that their own work, already renowned as printmaking or painting, can hold further surprise and potential for excellence in another medium.

Yet common criticisms of this exhibition are that the Australian painter has not yet learned to design for the loom and that the tapestries are indistinguishable from the paintings or prints which inspired them.

The painters do not claim to be, nor, on the whole, try to be, proficient tapestry designers. Most of those involved have clearly confessed their late and rather casual introduction to the art and are happy and generous enough to submit their work for substantial re-designing by the weavers. It has also been claimed that contrary to Lurcat's ideas they see tapestry merely as a medium for the reproduction of paintings! The statements made by the artists refute this view completely. Such a stance would inevitably demote the weavers to the role of skilled repitition workers — something which seems to be quite outside the programme envisaged by Sue Walker. (and rightly so).

The exhibition visually refutes the claim that 'slavish copying' takes place. The test panels sometimes show brilliant deviation from the original, and always show substantial freedom from it. Sue Walker simply says, 'The weaver's role is not one of simply copying a painting — that would be a pointless exercise. Rather, it is through interpretation to invest the artist's original concept with the specific qualities of tapestry.'(4)

The test pieces have the appeal and quality of the working sketch. They are made after much consultation with the artists, and after the work has had time to impress itself on the weaver's consciousness. The very real divergences are demonstrated early in the process, before the crucial and unalterable decisions are made. One also has the feeling that the variety of styles chosen for interpretation is, for the Victorian Tapestry Workshop, something of an elimination round. They have used these two years to test which kinds of images and effects will best suit their emerging workshop style.

One element which demands a great deal of experience is colour. Woven colour has a richness and identity of its own but the complexities of its use are enormous. The texture of woven yarn, particularly wool, can absorb colour and soften its contrasts in unpredictable ways. It is the interaction of colours that determines the subtlety, or vibrancy, of the woven surface and it is close knowledge of such interraction that the weaver must acquire. M. E. Chevreul, probably the most objective colour analyst of all time, was employed by the Gobelin factories, in the nineteenth century, to try to perfect knowledge of such interactions for weavers. A nineteenth century edition of his work actually found its way to the State Library of Victoria and can be consulted today on matters relating to the simultaneous — contrast of colours.(5)

In the catalogue for the recent exhibition the painter William Kelly referred to his interest in tapestry for the resolution of 'divisionist' type colour problems. He says that it is, 'the nature of the medium to cause colour to sparkle . . to sing, and to emanate a rare clarity and vitality.' This can occur but often does not. To preorchestrate colour relationships, particularly where texture is involved, depends on enormous expertise.

Tapestries in this exhibition in which subtleties of colour and tone are not very successful include those after works by Jeffery Smart and William Kelly. The paintings of these artists demand the most sensitive translation, and understanding of chromatic values. The mood and timbre of the Smart or the Kelly have not been captured sufficiently to result in sensitive translation. On the other hand admirable results have been achieved in the tapestry detail group for Jan Senberg's work 'The Flyer' (1978). The by no means simple colour and tone of Senberg's psychologically presumed technological wastelands, with their darkened chemically toned and smoke hazed space, has begun to be captured. Whether the sensitivity could be maintained over an entire tapestry remains to be seen. Certainly the early promise of the 'details' was not sustained in the tapestry after the painting by Smart.

Sue Walker has stressed that decisions about tonal balance, woven surface, yarn mixtures and broad handling must be made before the weaving begins. Unhappily the weaver cannot continually re-adjust the colour relationships to achieve the greater harmony or disharmony necessary to recreate the feel, or mood, of a work. The tapestry is always in danger of 'going flat' and it is almost irrevocable once it happens. This may have happened with the Henri Bastin inspired tapestry, 'Paradise', (1978) in which a dull brown ground absorbs the primitive joy of the birds and destroys the exotic opulence and lushness of the vegetation. It is difficult to imagine that this dreariness was the original intention, or that it's occurrence was accurately estimated prior to weaving.

The interpretation of colour for the Alun Leach-Jones tapestries 'Emerald Hill Yellow' (1976/77) and 'Vertical Pinks' (1978 — not exhibited) seems to be a simpler matter. The artist created his designs specifically for tapestry and presented the weavers with an opportunity to recreate large flat areas of relatively unambiguous colour. The artist is a recognized colourist and has spent years investigating, through paintings and prints, the interactions of colour. The immediate simplicity of his colour is probably not so simple. Alan McCulloch claims that the tapestry designer must aim at 'simplicity to achieve profound decoration.' I don't think there are any recipes for 'profound decoration' but Alun Leach-Jones' hard earned simplicity has, in this case, paid off for the tapestry workshop. To create a strong gestalt, where colour and form mutually re-inforce each other and collectively overcome the seductive qualities of woollen texture, is no simple matter.

'Try Tapes' (1977), after a design by Richard Larter, is similarly successful. In this work another colour-success device is utilized. Areas of pure colour are isolated by achromatic grounds. The mass-media type imagery — faces of the contemporary pop world — are brilliantly executed. The visual impact of the tapestry is at least as strong as the large gauche, 'Some-one, Some-where, Maybe', (1977) which hung next to it.

Another very successful translation, which depends for its effect on the surrealist possibilities of tone, is the sample 'Still Life and Comfy, II' after Keith Looby's work 'Still Life and Comfy'. The solitary, enigmatic quality of familiar objects deprived of reference systems creates a presence which is accentuated by the tonal strength and simplicity. The weavers have re-created the feeling of this work very well.

A further translation problem for he art-weaver is the interaction

of texture with the shape, or form, of the image. Patrick McCaughey, again in his introduction to the exhibition catalogue, stresses that, 'Art has a right to console as well as a duty to change and the decorative supplies that right.' He points out that, traditionally, tapestry has enriched architecture, 'by its natural warmth as a medium, its "give" compared to marble, stone, brick, glass or steel.' However I would not go so far as to say as he does, that, 'What gives substance to the decorative, what stops it from being trivial, is the medium.' Such a view underrates the artist's skill in handling the medium and more importantly the conception. However the medium does contribute to the range of possibilities at an artist's disposal and can often be a fundamental factor in the success or failure of the translation of the conception.

One of the least successful works in the exhibition was, 'Watching the Brolgas, Western Australia', (1977) after a design by Eric Thake. Comparison with Thake's Lino cut, 'She's Warm Alright', (1966-67) shows clearly that where as the print depends for its effect on the decisive and finite edges between figure and ground this same effect can never be achieved in woven wool. Similarly William Kelly's 'Children's Blocks, with Eggs', (1977) depends, for its presence, on the pristine quality of the forms — which again cannot be adequately re-created in wool.

Finally we may ask how a painstaking and largely predetermined technique like tapestry weaving, carried out in a form and colour modifying medium like wool, can possibly recreate the feeling of effects achieved during the constantly adjusted form and colour relationships of the painting of an artist like Roger Kemp, or the primitive, directness of Ken Whisson? Yet it is precisely in the test pieces for these artists' work that the ultimate success of the Victorian Tapestry Workshop is augured.

The test samples for Kemp's 'Untitled' (1978) are delicate and subtle, and in themselves hauntingly beautiful. They are painted without denying their medium or technique — they promise and echo Kemp while they represent his familiar imagery with enormous artistic license.

Of similar quality and promise is the test piece after work by Ken Whisson. In such pieces the verve and the growing confidence of the emerging artist-weavers are witnessed.

Jenny Zimmer

(1) Phrase taken from the Victorian Tapestry Workshop's Prospectus.
(2) Sue Walker, Craft Australia, Southern Spring 1978, p. 32.
(3) All artists' comments are taken from the Exhibition Catalogue
(4) Sue Walker, Craft Australia, Southern Spring 1978 p.31.
(5) M. E. Chevreul, The Principles of Harmony and Contrast of Colour Longmans, London 1855

The Third International Exibition of Miniature Textiles 1978 at the British Crafts Centre, London, England.

This exhibition, only the third of its kind, has already achieved international respect, and attracts entries from craftsmen of quality from 31 countries. The wisdom of having a panel of selectors such as Liesbeth Crommelin, Maureen Hodge, Paul J. Smith and Ann Sutton is immediately apparent, for the 131 pieces exhibited are diversified in design and technique, and this results in an exhibition at once stimulating and indicative of what is happening in textiles today.

Outstanding is the elegant whimsy of 'Two Tea Bags' woven in silver wire by Arlene Fisch (U.S.A.) and the six richly coloured postage stamp sized tapestries of 'The Lady and the Unicorn' by Medeleine Deny (France) in which every detail has been carefully and lovingly woven in a fine yarn adjusted to the size of the tapestry. This scaling down of materials to the concept of miniature is not always successfully achieved; as for instance 'A Screw of Rope' by Mariyo Yagi (Japan) is in no sense a miniature, it is just a small object, whereas the immaculate small basket 'White Pot with Bone' by Linda Garfunkel (U.S.A.) exemplifies perfect harmony between object, material and technique. Another and different basket is 'Basket with Brown Lines' by Kay Sekimachi (U.S.A.). This is a remarkable piece of quadruple weaving. 'Extension A' and 'Extension B' by Akiko Shimanuki (Japan) are intricately woven and folded objects, soft sculptured puzzles one wants to play with.

Of the flat tapestries, the two small Gobelin Tapestries by Maureen Hodge (U.K.) in neutral colours are full of evocative detail drawing the eye back again and again. Archie Brennan (U.K.) shows two of his small and highly successful illusionist Gobelin tapestries, but one begins to look for some new development or direction from him. 'Nine City Blocks' by Merle Barnett (U.S.A.) and 'History' by Liliana Anastasescu (Rumania) exploit their chosen technique well, and Fiona Matheson's (U.K.) little mousetrap of a loom with tapestry in progress as well as the 'bait' of a finished insect is a delight. Tapestry III by Ingunn Skogholt (Norway) is poetic and mystic, with a gentle harmony of colour.

Mary Beeston

Anne Mercer — Bonython's Adelaide August 1978

A pleasant blend of updated Edwardiana, contemporary European and traditional ceramic style, all professionally finished, yet curiously unsettling in their totality, best describes Anne's current offering.

Anne's work has always been of a consistently professional standard. This reflects back to her meticulous attention to finish and design.

The most satisfying section of the varied selection on show, was the straight functional. Bowls looked like bowls, and more importantly they looked as if they would satisfy the user. The storage jars with sgraffito labels, coffee, tea, sugar, etc. appealed because of relationship between colour, size gradation and the graphic treatment of the labels. Anne appears to excel at functional work. Too often, so-called functional ware masquerades under the guise of the great "art" pot, often badly finished and of little utilitarian merit, and it is a credit to Anne that she has managed to produce functional work that has a very unpretentious honest feel.

Dragon Pot. Salt Glazed.

Photography: Grant Hancock

Also on offer was an amusing collection of quasi-functional, decorative salt glazed dragon pots. These had an air of beguiling charm and illustrated Anne's ability to inject just enough "magic" into them to lift them well above the level of the ordinary.

Mark Thompson

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TOUCH

News from the Crafts Council of Australia

Issue 4

National Conference: Canberra

The National Conference of the Crafts Council of Australia (March 29 to April 1 1979) was held in Canberra at the Craft Centre, the offices of the Crafts Council of the A.C.T. and drew together craftsmen from all states of Australia who took the opportunity to meet together and contribute to planning and discussion on the subject of Contact.

This was the first conference to have a special theme — Contact with the Community, Contact through the Printed Word, Contact through exhibitions and Contact through Resources. Open panel sessions were held on all these subjects.

The Conference, by establishing a theme, broke away from the previous style of conferences which mainly consisted of business sessions, although the 1978 conference in Brisbane opened the way for more public participation, by including a number of lectures on subjects such as craft education and crafts as a livelihood.

It is the hope of the Crafts Council of Australia that the annual conference will in time become the focus for real communication within the crafts, bringing together craftsmen in all media to exchange information and to gain stimulation from contact. Because of the size of Australia many craftsmen work in isolation and it is hoped that machinery may in time be set up to make it possible for craftsmen from all over the country to join forces once a year at the annual conference.

This year the conference was opened by the Hon. R. J. Ellicott Minister for Home Affairs with Responsibility for the Arts. Mr Ross Hohnen chaired the open session on Contact with the Community. The Panel consisted of Don Boyce (The Community Arts Question), Doug Alexander (The Craftsman and the Community), Yvonne Sinclair (The Changing Role of the State Office in the Community), and Udo Sellbach (Training the Artist in the Community). Contact Through Exhibitions was chaired by Daniel Thomas of the Australian National Gallery and the panel consisted of Ray Norman (A Craftsman's Point of View), Tom McCulloch (To Stimulate or Provoke), Karen Beaver (To Sell or What?), and Joy Warren (To Survive?).

Contact Through Resources was an evening session, an illustrated explanation of the services of the Resource Centre of the Crafts Council of Australia given by Felicity Abraham, the director.

Contact through the Printed Word was chaired by Norman Creighton and the panel consisted of Tim Moorhead (An Informal Means of Education), Robert Bell (A Link Between Craftsmen), Grace Cochrane (Ideas or Information), Anna Griffiths (Weekly Craft Column), and April Hersey (Quarterly Magazine or Alternatives).

Craft Australia by Subscription only

Because of reduced funding it is no longer possible to print enough copies of "Craft" Australia" to supply bookstalls and newsagents. So from this issue onwards, until we are able to increase the print run again, we can only supply to subscribers. There will be a few copies available from State Craft Councils and at special galleries.

Unfortunately for the existence of this magazine, there are a great many craftsmen who read the one copy. If you are not yet a subscriber but someone who borrows from a friend we would urge you to fill in the coupon in the front of this issue and become a subscriber. Apart from the obvious reason that it would be sad indeed if your magazine faded away for lack of support from the very craftsmen for whom it attempts to act as a showcase, there is no longer the possibility of being able to supply back copies for those who wish to catch up.

At the present time we can only offer 10 issues from 1975 to 1978 as back numbers out of the 23 issues so far published. As from this current issue, because of the cut back in the print run, there will be virtually no back issues available.

"Craft Australia" is not included in the membership of any State Council and so the onus is on you as an individual to subscribe. Again because of limited funding it may be difficult to keep up renewal notices, though we will attempt to do this. However it would be advisable to make a diary note of your renewal date in order to keep up continuity.

Planned symposia

Discussions are currently proceeding in the Council and elsewhere into the possibility of holding symposia on Fibre, Metal and Wood during 1979.

The Wood Symposium is planned for Melbourne State College during September and

Due to increases in postal charges and overheads the subscription price for Craft Australia magazine has been increased. It is now $12.00 + $2.00 postage = $14 a year. Overseas price $12.00 +$6.00 postage = $18.00 a year.

will include Michael Cooper, the Council's first Fellow, and John Makepeace who is expected to visit Australia at that time, as participants.
During 1978 the Crafts Council of New South Wales held a very successful symposium on glass, both hot and cold.

The Crafts Council Fellow

A quiet American wood craftsman and sculptor came into Sydney airport on March 7 to take up the first Crafts Council of Australia fellowship. He is Michael Jean Cooper from California and he will work in two industrial situations in Australia — with the Robert Dunlop furniture factory in Brisbane and with the Charles Catt company of furniture makers in Perth.
Michael arrived with a metal trunk filled with 100 kilos of tools, and great expectations of what this period in Australia will hold.
Although primarily a sculptor and craftsman who has made a great success in producing non functional items, Michael teaches furniture design to Junior College students in Santa Clara, California.
Michael's earliest memories are of being in the cabinet making workshop of his grandfather and he has always found working with wood very satisfying. However he began his career in graphic design and it was only after he realised that working with wood was really what he wanted to do that he went to San Jose State College to study sculpture. Later he attended the University of California.
His list of awards, exhibitions and his representation in private and public collections is very impressive. He has held six one man exhibitions and been included in thirty-four group exhibitions. He has also been the subject of a number of films recording the sculptures he has produced. He has attempted to show the violence inherant in our society today by including guns in many of his works.
John Kelsey the editor of "Fine Woodworking" who was one of Cooper's referees for the Fellowship said this of him:

Michael Cooper at work

"Cooper has won wide recognition and a number of prestigious prizes in California, as a sculptor and also as an extraordinary craftsman. His ability to rearrange one's perceptions of technology by creating surrealistic images in wood, is simply magnificent. Technically his forte is bending thin laminates of wood to create the form he has imagined. Most craftsmen find bending an arduous process fraught with uncertainty. But Cooper makes it seem effortless and exact, both by his skill and by the novel procedures he has developed. Once the wood is built up and bent, he must carve it to the precise contour he desires — and again he does it without apparent effort and without fault."
John Kelsey knows Stephen Hogbin who was craftsman in residence at Melbourne State College and commented that "Cooper is as creative, skilled and unusual a person as Hogbin with as much to offer. There are precious few things I would put in the category of these two men. If Hogbin brought you useful insight and information, Cooper will too."
Michael Cooper will take part in a Wood Symposium which will be held at Melbourne State College in September. John Makepeace (see our story in this issue) will also take part in the Symposium. Cooper will also give workshops in most states.
Applications for the 1980 fellowship are now being processed. The Crafts Council has been concerned that only a small percentage of Australians have applied for the Fellowship and would like to make it plain that applications are invited from all craftsmen and all those associated with any aspect of the crafts in any part of the world.

Public Art

In the January 1979 issue of "The Crafts Report" the American newspaper on marketing the crafts, edited by Michael Scott, there is a report on the new grants being given by the Visual Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts for "building arts" to enable artists and craftsmen to research and plan architectural components. Perhaps the proposed new Architecture Board of the Australia Council may consider following the same route.
"The Crafts Report" also announced that the National Endowment for the Arts is preparing a list and slide collection of the work of craftsmen who have worked in collaboration with architects or who have created architectural work. The report does not state that this list is confined to American craftsmen so interested Australians may like to write for further information to Eudorah Moore, Crafts Coordinator, National Endowment for the Arts, Visual Arts Program, Mail Stop 501, Washington, DC 20506.

Marketing the Arts

An interesting series of seminars have recently been held in Australia and New Zealand through A.R.T.S. Ltd who invited machine and the patient will die. The cuts in the budget allotted for the Arts are getting bigger all the time. It will not stop with the Sculpture Centre. The Crafts Council of Australia, State Craft Councils, Art Councils, Art Associations, Theatre groups etc are all threatened. Be wise. We can fight together this decision to the hilt and put a stop to a slow erosion process or else disappear one after the other. At the end of which most of our creative talent will have migrated or stopped.
Will it matter?
Yes, because the quality of free

Mr Keith Diggle, an expert on the subject, to give his ideas on the successful marketing of the arts.
Mr Keith Diggle (41) has had wide experience of arts marketing both as practitioner and consultant. He was the first director of the Merseyside Arts Association, from 1969 to 1974. Before that he had helped to found and then manage the English Sinfonia. During the 1970's he was a pioneer in the development of arts marketing through lectures, seminars and conferences. He is visiting lecturer on arts marketing to The City University, London and the Polytechnic of Central London. His book "Marketing the Arts" was published by The City University in 1976.
In Sydney at the Bondi Pavilion he held two one day seminars attended by arts administrators from all sections of the arts. Similar meetings were held in Auckland, Wellington Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide and Perth.
In the preliminary material supporting his visit Diggle wrote: "When I first became aware that there was more to my job of promoting the arts than putting up posters or talking enthusiastically to the local press about this or that show, the word "marketing" was hardly ever, if at all, applied to what was involved in the bringing together of the arts and their audiences. Today the word "marketing" is much in vogue in the arts world . . . but at the higher levels of the arts world, where the important decisions are made, there is little evidence to show that there is any greater understanding of what this now fashionable word means to the arts than there was just a few years ago when 'publicity' and 'advertising' and 'public relations' were bandied about."
As one of the examples of successful marketing Mr Diggle cited the case of a classical music magazine which he helped to launch. The marketing strategy was to give away 10,000 copies to all professional musicians and music organisations to stir up interest and to encourage advertising. Additionally 10,000 copies were distributed to newsagencies with accompanying promotional material, even though the promoters knew that 95% of the copies sent out would not be sold but would be destroyed as "unsolds". A barrage of radio commercials supported the new magazine.
At the same time a lively advertising team of five people was recruited and trained in telephone selling. The editorial team of fourteen was established and the magazine prepared each month with material acceptable to the editor. No further committee of experts was established to supervise the editorial group who were seen to be dedicated to the magazine's success and entirely responsible. In fact no brakes of any kind were applied to the publication as it was launched on the market.
The project was sponsored by two enlightened entrepreneurs who were confident that it would make money in time but were also interested in promoting classical music. They kept their cheque books open without flinching to the $126,000 point, before the tide turned. Now the magazine is a success and making a profit of $12,000 per issue.
Mr Diggle said he felt this was an excellent example of successful marketing in a field that is very difficult. However he admitted that few government authorities would have the courage to market a magazine in this manner. "Usually arts magazine administrators are subjected to constant harrassment to become commercially successful but not given any means to achieve the result. In fact what we did with this music magazine was to market it in a bold commercial manner. It did not creep out like most arts publications with a tiny print run, a small staff and without promotion."
Marketing, according to Diggle offers no guarantees.
"Essentially, all that marketing says is that if we analyse and examine every step and factor that is involved in the bringing together of a product and its market, arts and the people in our case, and we then organise our management team and resources so that the components work together, we are much more likely to achieve success."

Letter to the Editor

Object: *The continuation in optimum condition of the existence and work of the Sculpture Centre in The Rocks, Sydney*

With the Visual Art Board's endeavour to dismiss any further help and grant for the proper running of the centre, the very existence of its function is threatened with extinction.
It could be of course pointed out that my concern for its welfare is a late conversion since I only joined its membership in February 1979; well, it could be so, but it is better than deserting a sinking ship — Had I been alive and had known of the fate of the 'Titanic' beforehand, I would have fought to get a ticket — If I had honestly thought that my presence on board could have made a difference in preventing this catastrophe.
My choosing the example of the 'Titanic' as a disaster is not fortuitous, on the contrary, the disaster of the disappearance of the Sculpture Centre could be of even greater magnitude.
It is not as isolated a case as people's apathy or complacency would have them think. There is a war of attrition being waged against the funding of non-commercial art forms; against the promotion of culture 'per se' by the Federal Government on the grounds that it is (apparently from their point of view) a waste of money.
If you believe that, like Herbert Read, Art is not a contextual but an essential part of society then it is time to stop our division between Fine Arts, Applied Arts, Painters, Sculptors, Potters, Photographers etc. The Sculpture Centre will not be the only organisation that will be impaired in its function to the point of non-existence. The Centre will, of course not be killed by the Australia Council, not directly — switch the electricity off on a kidney

expression in this country is at stake —
Yes, because it will impair, beyond repair, the dissemination of information and knowledge —
Yes, because it will maim the potential for education of the public old and young —
Yes, because we can provide an alternative for increased leisure time due to unemployment —
Yes, because the Sydney Bridge is not enough to attract culturally minded tourists.
Yes, because a country that promotes only commercial ventures also promotes mediocrity —
Yes, because a civilisation that stifles its creative potential is found only in Archeological diggings — dead.
As for you people who work for the Australia Council, at the implementation of the Federal Policy of Attrition, blindly protected by the laws of hierarchy, take note that as well will disappear your 'raison d'etre' and your 'job' in the end.
Together all members of these various organisations represent an active section of the population; together we mean something. Let's fight together or let's die standing with dignity for something we profess to believe in. Art and creativity for its own sake. It is time we joined forces.
F. M. R. Chepeaux

Diary of Exhibitions

ACT

Beaver Galleries
Red Hill
May 1- May 20 — Second Skin Batik & Weaving
Jun 3- Jun 24 — Woven Hangings — Mo Wedd

NEW SOUTH WALES

Potters Gallery
Darlinghurst
Apr — Ceramics — Judi Elliott

Holdsworth Galleries
Woollahra
Apr 17- May 4 — Sculpture — Guy Boyd
May 8- May 25 — Wool Wallhangings — Ben Shearer
May 29- Jun 15 — Canvas Sculpture — Paul Bakker

Watters Gallery
East Sydney
May 16- Jun 2 — Sculpture — Tom Coleiny

Robin Gibson Gallery
Paddington
Apr 3- Apr 21 — Paintings & Sculpture — Emanuel Raft

Gallery A
Paddington
May 19- Jun 9 — Sculpture — Clement Meadmore

Hogarth Gallery
Paddington
May — Sculpture & Wood — Terry Stringer
Jun — Jewellery — Peter Tully

Crafts Council of Australia Gallery
Apr 27- May 25 — Applique/Embroidery — Elizabeth Kruger

David Jones Art Gallery
Jun 11- Jun 30 — Jewellery — Wendy Ramshaw & David Watkins

QUEENSLAND

Crafts Council of Queensland
Mar 30- Apr 25 — Weaving — Dorothy Devine
May 27- Jun 20 — Jewellery — Lyn Tune

Queensland Arts Council
Apr 21- Apr 30 — The Rug Event

Potters Gallery
Spring Hill
Apr 27- May 17 — Ceramics — Qld Potters Association Members
May 17- Jun 7 — Ceramics — Kingsley Marks

Victor Mace Gallery
Apr 27- May 5 — Ceramics — Peter Travis

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Bonython Gallery
Nth Adelaide
Mar 24- Apr 18 — Ceramics — Tim Moorhead
Apr 2- May 16 — Jewellery — Kate O'Sullivan

Jam Factory
Apr 29- May 20 — Glass — Group Invitation Show
May 25- Jun 17 — Photographs & Porcelain-Dalman & Headley

TASMANIA

Burnie Art Gallery
May 24- Jun 14 — Festival of Tas. Fibre Exhibition
Jun 15- Jul 15 — The Sodeisha Group 'Object Ceramics'

Tas. Museum & Art Gallery
Mar 20- Apr 22 — Festival of Tas. Fibre Exhibition

Design Centre
Launceston
Apr — Paintings & Pots — Rob Iken
May — Glass — Ken Bartlett

VICTORIA

Craft Centre
South Yarra
Apr 23- May 5 — Ceramics — John Dermer
May 14- May 26 — Ceramics — Milton Moon
May 28- June 9 — Ceramics — Reg Preston

Gryphon Gallery
Apr 30- May 18 — Ceramics — Joy Georgeson & Don Wordsorth

Potters College Warrandyte
Apr 5- Apr 22 — Pottery — Tom & Brigitte Cockram
May 3- May 20 — Potters — Kay Scott

Imago Gallery
South Yarra
Apr 24- May 12 — Embroidered Textiles — Lois Densham & Anna Griffiths
Jun 26- Jul 7 — Handmade paper — Sonia & Kayes van Bodegraven

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Fremantle Arts Centre
Apr — Sculpture — Tony Jones
May — Ceramics Study Group Mixed.
Jun — Pottery — Jean Robins

Kate Platt
A Retrospective

Would owners or anyone who knows the whereabouts of work large or small by Kate Platt please write to Roy Platt, 10 Norma Road, Palm Beach, NSW 2108 Telephone 919 4995 or 929 8177.